AN AARDVARK-VANAHEIM/ WIN-MILL PRODUCTION

FOLLOWING CEREBUS

No. 9 $8.95

NIAGARA FALLS & other forces of nature

Neal Adams parody commission from earlier this year.

Following Cerebus

Vol. 1 #9 August 2006

"Mind Games," "Another Thing Coming," "Thou Good and Faithful Cerebite," and all our other regular features will return in *Following Cerebus* 10, which will be normal-sized. That's the plan, anyway....

Neal Adams and Dave Sim

Following Cerebus **produced by**

Craig Miller

&

John Thorne

Cerebus **comic book by**

Dave Sim

&

Gerhard

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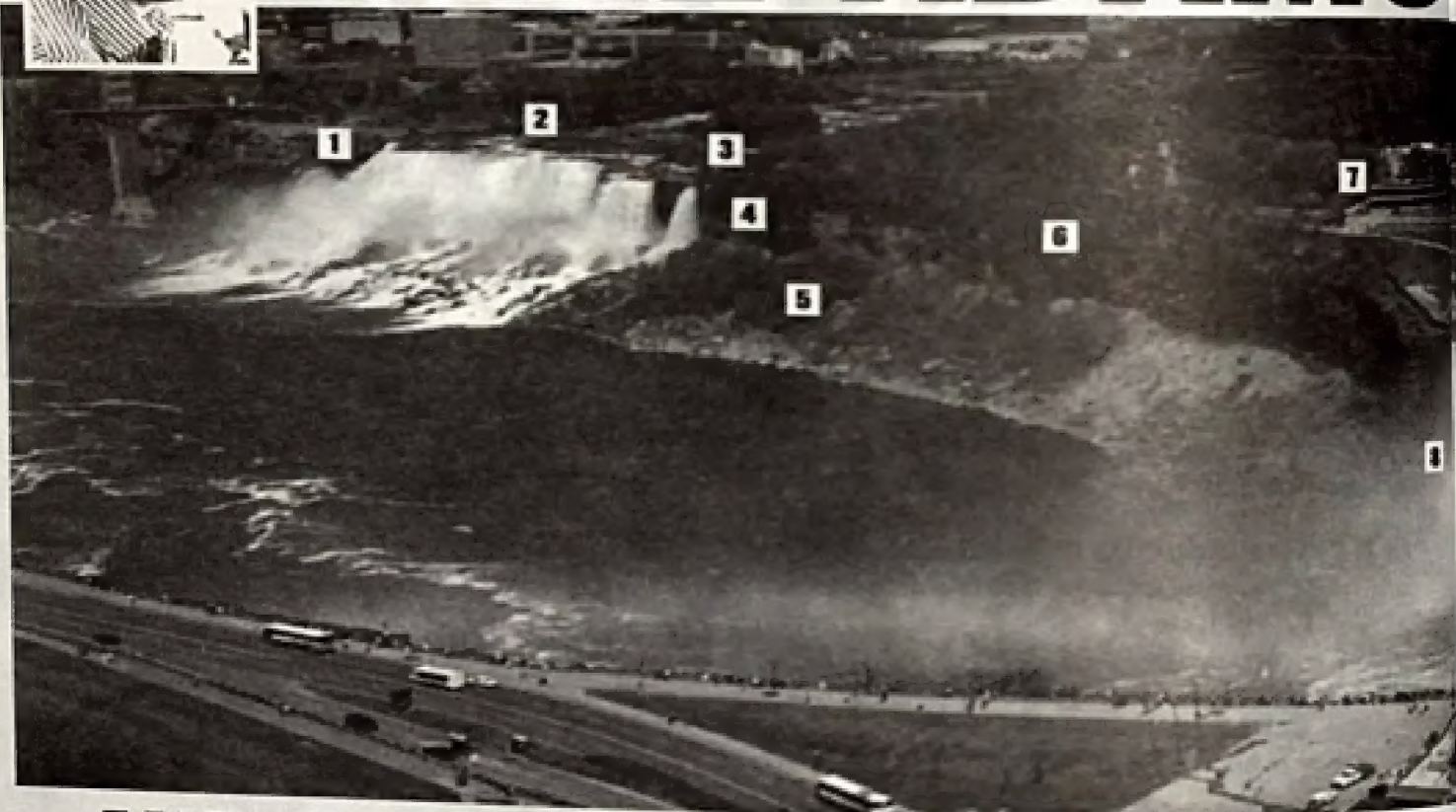
NEAL ADAMS

AND OTHER FORCES OF NATURE

a magazine-length *following cerebus* special

It was first conceived in my mind as a ride in from the airport and dinner with Neal Adams, roughly the same arrangement that I had had with the late Will Eisner (see "My Dinner with Will & Other Stories", *Following Cerebus* No.4). I had been keeping an eye out for any "names" from my personal Pantheon coming to Toronto and there he was: billed as a headline guest at the Canadian National Comic Book Expo in August of last year. I called Continuity Graphic Associates Incorporated in New York well ahead of time and asked to speak to Neal Adams.

"Can I ask who's calling?" the receptionist asked.

"Yes, it's Dave Sim."

A short pause as that failed to match any entry in her mental rolodex.

"Does he know you?"

That was an interesting question. "I believe so, yes." A short pause. "Hold on."

I was on hold for about twenty seconds when the line came back to life.

"The Dave Sim who does *Cerebus*?" It was a voice very, very familiar to me.

"Mr. Adams, sir," I laughed. "Yes. That would be me."

I laid my pitch out as straight and unadorned as I could. My comp copy of *Wizard* magazine had come in that morning, and I saw from an ad in there that he was coming to Toronto for a convention, and I'd like to pick him up at the airport and buy him dinner if that was all right with him.

"That sounds fine if you include my family—my family's coming with me. My son Josh—who's eighteen—and my wife, Marilyn," short pause, "Who is also eighteen."

That would be no problem, I said. I certainly wasn't going to react to the latter statement as unlikely as it seemed. It *is* the Twenty-First century, and the man lives in New York, the same city as Woody Allen.

There was some off-telephone conversation with Marilyn, his wife, to find out when they were coming in and did they have the plane tickets yet? Marilyn, I mused. It seemed appropriate that the guy I always thought of as the comic-book JFK (the comic-book JFK *and* Elvis to be accurate) was married to a woman named Marilyn.

NIAGARA FALLS

some of the locations mentioned in this article: 1/ Prospect Point 2/ The American Falls 3/ Bridal Veil Falls Observation area 4/ Bridal Veil or Luna Falls 5/ Cave of the Winds 6/ Goat Island 7/ State Park Restaurant 8/ Terrapin Point 9/ Terrapin Rocks 10/ The Horseshoe Falls 11/ Table Rock Observation area 12/ Table Rock Restaurant
at the extreme upper left is the end of the Rainbow Bridge entering the U.S. / Directly across from the American Falls is the *Maid of the Mist* landing (not shown)

by dave sim

He relayed an answer and then was corrected off-telephone and attempted to relay the correction, got that wrong and was corrected further.

I said, without thinking, "Maybe I should just talk to Marilyn."

If a phone receiver could bristle, mine did at that moment. But forensic precision cuts both ways.

"Maybe you should," he agreed, "Hold on."

Marilyn Adams certainly had a voice that could have been that of an eighteen-year-old, or she could have been twenty-five or thirty or forty. The voice was pleasant and as matter-of-fact as her husband's had been, and we quickly established that as far as they knew they were coming in on the Wednesday before the show and that I should call closer to the date to find out what their flight number and exact arrival time would be. Which I agreed to do.

Closing the deal

I called back the Wednesday prior to their anticipated arrival and asked to speak to Neal Adams and was, after a short delay, put through, instead, to Marilyn.

Touché, I thought.

"Neal has never seen Niagara Falls," she said, "So we're thinking of renting a car and driving down to Niagara Falls that day."

My eyes widened. Niagara Falls. My favourite place in the world.

"If you'd like," I said, "I'd be glad to take you down there and guide you around. If you don't mind me tagging along."

"Oh, that would be great. You can come with us in the car and give us directions on how to get there," she said.

"Actually, I don't know how to get there. I don't drive."

Long pause. "Then how are you going to pick us up at the airport?"

"It'll be a limousine."

We concluded the arrangements.

Pearson Airport

And so it was that I found myself in the same International Arrivals level area at Lester B. Pearson International Airport's Terminal 1 where I had met the late Will Eisner a little over a year before and which had been renovated in the interim and, mer-

Green Lantern/Green Arrow *76: "a white-hot revelatory and incandescent peak" in Dave Sim's adolescent life.*

cifully, looked only remotely as it had then, which took some slight measure of the sting out of the memory of his passing. I had bought flowers on that occasion for Ann Eisner (who hadn't ended up being able to make it) and now wondered if Marilyn had sounded like a "flowers type" on the phone. If she *was* eighteen, it could be taken the wrong way. I don't think too many men twelve years Woody

Sim: "I always thought of [Adams] as the comic-book JFK (the comic-book JFK *and* Elvis to be accurate)."

Allen's junior would bring flowers to Soon-Yi when visiting the Allens' penthouse. Not if they wanted to be invited back. There was also the problem that we weren't going straight downtown to a hotel but spending the day in Niagara Falls. Cut flowers aren't known to flourish after eight hours in the back of a car on a hot summer day and if Marilyn Adams *was* a "flowers type" that would turn a thoughtful gift into a slow form of torture. The flight was delayed an hour, so I went upstairs to the gift shop area to see if there was anything "vase-like" for sale. There was bottled water in the car which could facilitate floral life support (as well as Diet Coke—both Josh and Neal, it seemed, were Diet Coke men according to Marilyn).

Do you present the flowers and the vase simultaneously? Present the flowers in the airport and then the vase when you get into the car?

There was a grisly-looking object with crossed Canadian and American flags that was the tallest and narrowest freestanding item capable of holding water and flowers. "Oh, how…unique." I pictured her saying while inwardly wondering at the tasteless upbringing I must have had. There was also a pricey crystal vase. Don't be silly, I thought. I returned to the arrivals area and watched the clock slowly tick down to where the flowers became a moot point.

Over the preceding few weeks—as well as on the trip down to the airport and now, more vividly, in the arrivals area—I had been backtracking mentally through My Life with Neal Adams. Not just my pre-eminent memories of the way that his work had lit up my adolescent world—which had reached a white-hot revelatory and incandescent peak with his illustrations for Denny O'Neil's script for *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* No.76 particularly the epilogue—but also each of the "ships passing in the night" near misses before I had finally gotten to meet him face-to-face more than twenty years after the first occasion I had seen him in person.

Cosmicon

He had been a guest at the first comic book convention I had attended in 1972, Cosmicon in Toronto. I had had no problem talking to Jim Steranko or Joe Kubert or Gray Morrow when the opportunities had presented themselves—as if I had known them for years—but at one point Neal Adams had been walking through the Dealers' Room, unattended and at a leisurely pace, and I had just watched dumbfounded—I'm sure with my mouth agape—as he walked past me. The convention had been held at Winters College on the campus of York University, and part of the set-up had featured six classrooms upstairs dedicated to displays of original artwork by the attending artist guests. Neal Adams' room was literally wallpapered with the original artwork to "No Evil Shall Escape My Sight" (*Green Lantern/Green Arrow* 76) "What Can One Man Do?" (*Green Lantern/Green Arrow* 87), "Night of the Reaper" (*Batman* 237) and a couple of other stories and as-yet unpublished covers. I could feel my brain detaching from my body and doing backflips just standing in there looking at those pages. I literally had to leave to recover my equilibrium. That's really the point where I knew I wanted to draw comic books for a living. Actually, it would be more accurate to say that that was when I knew I wanted to be Neal Adams when I grew up, but the one ambition eventually eroded into the other once I had come to my senses.

He was very good on the star-studded panel on the Saturday of the show ("star-studded" as in Jim Steranko, Gray Morrow, Joe Kubert, Neal Adams, T. Casey Brennan, Mike Kaluta, Steve Skeates, and Stan Lee), where everyone seemed to be at the top of his verbal game. Steve Skeates had been bemoaning the thematic limitations of what was then allowed in mainstream comics and was asked to cite examples. "Well," he said, "things like the cliché use of symbolism." To which Stan Lee had countered "Or the symbolic use of clichés?" At one point an audience member asked the panellists to comment on the underground comix movement (which was cresting in that year before the 1973 US Supreme Court decision on obscenity would put something of a permanent damper on things).

"A lot of these guys are getting embarrassingly rich," Adams had said. "They're driving to their personal appearances on college campuses in their Rolls Royces and having to park three blocks away and walk in so they can maintain their starving artist identities."

As you might expect, this went over like a lead balloon with a crowd at least partly composed of Canadian college students. It had been widely speculated (to the point of having become received wisdom at the time) that Robert Crumb had become a millionaire from the proceeds from Ralph Bakshi's *Fritz the Cat* animated cartoon. The Bakshi cartoon had been the first instance of a cartoonist who was the sole proprietor of his intellectual property signing with Hollywood and, with no corporate middleman in sight, everyone's imagination had run to a financial "score" that wouldn't actually take place for more than a decade when Kevin Eastman and Pete Laird signed their deal for the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* live-action movies. In actual fact the tax burden alone from Robert Crumb's modest windfall—substantially less than a million dollars—would almost wipe him out, but that wasn't what was popularly believed.

Dave posing with Neal Adams at the Diamond Seminar in 1993. (Neal's daughter Kris is in the background.)

"It's just something you do," Adams shrugged, addressing what he saw as the core point of underground comix. "When you learn how to draw, you draw your own pornography. And after a while you get so good, you can't even show it to anybody. But when you get older, you're supposed to get over it."

"I have an original Neal Adams cover in my collection," interjected Jim Steranko. "On the back there's a drawing of a girl stepping out of her pants and written next to it, it says 'Who says Neal Adams can't draw girls?'"

"Okay, so I'm not *completely* over it," he had sheepishly admitted as the room erupted in laughter.

On one of my frequent trips to his classroom art display I found Neal Adams himself in residence, perched on a student desk and surrounded by a number of admirers and detractors: the former listening abjectly and the latter berating him for what they saw as his implied criticism of Robert Crumb, a harbinger of the schism that would come to dominate the comic-book field to the present day. One individual in particular was really, really steamed. *"I don't give a f–k HOW much money Robert Crumb makes—the man is a GENIUS,"* he fumed. Back and forth it went, Adams barely able to get a word in edgewise. I could not have been less interested in the discussion and went back to

Jim Steranko's Dali-inspired poster for the first Cosmicon in 1972

studying the splash page to "What Can One Man Do?"

Don't Let it Be Forgot

It's no stretch to say that for the wannabe photorealism school comic-book creators of my generation, Continuity Associates—9 E. 48th Street: I think I could forget my own address sooner than forget that one—was like the Kennedy White House and King Arthur's Round Table combined. To be one of the Crusty Bunkers, working elbow-to-elbow with THE Neal Adams, learning from the master and, under his patronage, gaining *entrée* into Marvel and DC, being handed plum commercial assignments—fanboy dreams were made of this. Of course, that's how it was seen by those of us who hadn't a snowball's chance in hell of ever being a part of it. (I'd drift off to sleep picturing Neal Adams at his drawing board peering at the cover of *Quack* No.3. "*This* guy. Get me *this* guy on the phone. I want him here and working by the end of the week").

Then, in the midst of my experience with *Orb* magazine, I had a conversation with Jim Craig, who had been one of the superstars on the magazine (he would later become the first Canadian comic-book creator to break into the mainstream—beating Gene Day by a period of a few months—when he pencilled the first issue of Marvel's *What If?*). At the time of our conversation, he had been to New York, showing his portfolio at Marvel and DC, and he had gone up to Continuity to see if he could get work there. By Craig's account, Neal Adams had mercilessly critiqued his work, all but tearing it to shreds, in a way that had left him literally quaking with humiliation and anger. Literal decades would pass before I realized that his recounting of the critique had been very short on specifics of what Neal Adams had said and heavy on Jim's reaction to it. It had been profoundly disillusioning to hear Jim recount his experience, but it had also been valuable and informative in a way that, again, I wouldn't end up recognizing for many years. Continuity, like Marvel and DC—and like life in general in the dog-eat-dog competitive world of NYC—was (as Chairman Mao once said of revolution) "not a tea party." Suddenly, I definitely didn't want to go to Continuity Associates to see what Neal Adams might have to say about my Beavers strips or *Oktoberfest Comics* or, most especially, my Neal Adams "homage" pages rendered in scratchy speedball pen nib lines self-admittedly miles below the level of Jim Craig's own professionalism and slick finish. I had a pretty good idea what he would say, and I was quite sure I wouldn't be any happier with it than Jim had been.

The legendary splash page to "What Can One Man Do?"

Of course, in retrospect, there had been great value in the hurt feelings I had endured vicariously through Jim Craig's experience. Having my illusions broken in pieces like that—unbeknownst to me at the time—had given me a much clearer view of what my own abilities were. If I was as good as I hoped I was and as good as I wanted to be, why *not* ask Neal Adams' opinion of my work? Answer? I wasn't anywhere near as good as I hoped I was. It's significant that the conversation with Jim Craig had taken place sometime between my original attempt at drawing "Picture This" and my subsequent version which was leagues above it in quality. In a real sense, without having any awareness of me or my work whatsoever, Neal Adams had provoked me into making that substantial leap forward by what he had "done" to Jim Craig. It's hard for me to underestimate the value of that boost even after more than thirty years in the business.

Once I started meeting guys who had actually been Crusty Bunkers—Joe Rubinstein, Marshall Rogers, Terry Austin, and others—the story that emerged was a good deal less glamorous than what I had pictured. From the anecdotes related, life at Continuity was sort of like Jim Craig's experience, only on a daily basis. Or if not a daily basis, there was an unwritten rule that a traumatic incident was always just around the corner if you weren't watching out for it. Or even if you were. There were only so many drawing boards to be rented up there and Neal Adams—by virtue of *being* Neal Adams—had had his pick of the *crème de la crème* to whom he would allow entrée. And just because you had made the initial cut, it didn't mean your work was without its shortcomings, and those shortcomings were always subject to Neal's own brand of forensic accu-

racy.

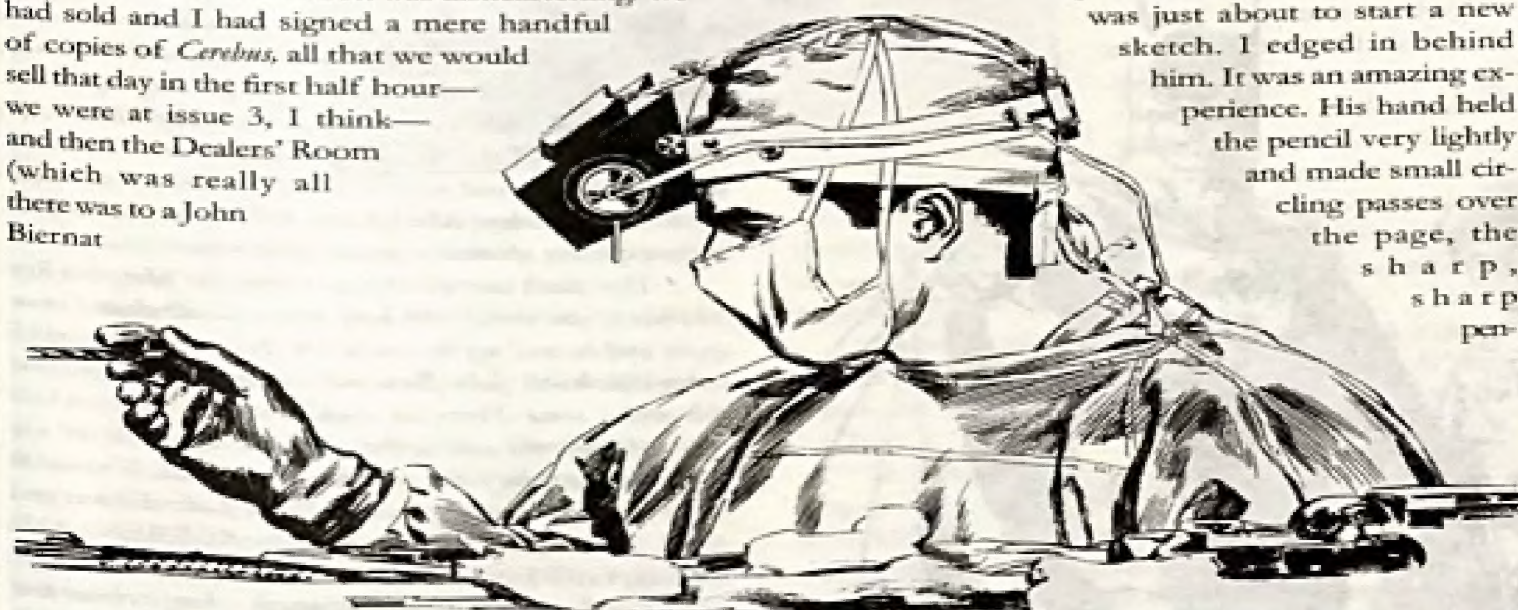
There was a sardonic edginess to those Crusty Bunkers who had stuck it out, renting their small square footage of space for their drawing boards and chairs—roughly $75 a month. Some were bitter, some were stricken, some were just sort of permanently dazed, some were amused. Some, like Mike (Funky) Nasser, went "AWOL," in interesting ways and were deemed to be Continuity Casualties, but I never met a Crusty Bunker who hadn't been deeply affected by the experience.

And the overall impression was more of a ragged band housed under one roof like Fagin's orphans in *Oliver Twist* than King Arthur's Knights of the Round Table.

Biernat's Torontocon

It's hard to believe that it was a mere six years after Cosmicon that Deni and I were attending John Biernat's original one-day Torontocons at the Hotel Toronto and that I was selling issues of my own comic book and doing sketches. One of these Torontocons featured Neal Adams as its headline guest, and I was asked if I wanted to be on a panel with him.

I said yes with no small measure of fear and trepidation. What if being on a panel with him put you in the same Jim Craig or Crusty Bunker category as a sitting duck? To be humiliated in front of a room full of comic fans....Of course, what I was overlooking was that Continuity Associates was Neal Adams' business and that a man's business is in a different category from his relations with people outside of that business. It had escaped my notice that even when the scraggly college student had been swearing at him to his face about Robert Crumb, Adams had remained poised and courteous.

The actual convention was disheartening. We had sold and I had signed a mere handful of copies of *Cerebus*, all that we would sell that day in the first half hour—we were at issue 3, I think—and then the Dealers' Room (which was really all there was to a John Biernat convention) was deserted. As the time for the panel approached, I got up and went to see where it was to be held (a panel room being a first for a Biernat convention). As soon as I walked out of the dealer's room, I saw why the convention was dead. There was one continuous line that wrapped around the escalators and then disappeared down a hallway. In the other direction it compressed through a narrow doorway into the confines of a small meeting room. I walked down to take a look and squeezed in past the crowd. And there was Neal Adams, chatting amiably away to the current batch of admirers lined up in front of his table where he was just about to start a new sketch. I edged in behind him. It was an amazing experience. His hand held the pencil very lightly and made small circling passes over the page, the s h a r p, s h a r p pen-

Art for the Ben Casey *comic strip that Adams worked on in the mid-sixties*

cil point making a series of small tick marks that were barely visibly. Tick. Hand motion. Tick. Hand motion. Tick. There must've been forty or fifty of them by the time he was done, scattered across the 9 x 12 pad of sketch paper. And then he started to hook them up, at first with barely larger tick marks and then little swoops of pencil line, some sharp and some curved. All seemingly random. A few lines here, a few lines there. And then suddenly there was a picture of Batman, his fist seeming to jut right out of the page, the arm perfectly foreshortened and shaded.

Sim: "Neal Adams had provoked me into making that substantial leap forward [in my own art] by what he had "done" to Jim Craig."

I "came to" when someone asked him, "Aren't you supposed to be on a panel right now?"

"Ahhh," he demurred, "I'd rather just stay here and bulls--t with you guys."

"Actually, I was supposed to be on the panel with you, and I'd rather stay here and watch you draw," I said, a pathetic attempt at establishing myself as a professional peer.

THE Neal Adams turned slowly and regarded me from beneath one arched eyebrow.

"Well, there you go," he said, turning back to his drawing and resuming his conversation with his spellbound audience.

True, he hadn't asked me who I was and what I did, but on the other hand, I hadn't volunteered the information. I was just glad that he hadn't asked me what the hell business would someone *like me* have being on a panel with someone *like him*. Bearing Jim Craig in mind, I figured I had come out ahead on the deal.

NYC 1979

As part of my nervous breakdown (or "nervous breakdown" depending on your point of view) in the early summer of 1979, I started getting these startling insights into how things worked, and one of these insights was about the future direction of the Direct Market, which was then in its early infancy. I wrote and typed a letter which reads as follows

Comic Book Fans:

If you are tired of not getting quality comic-book art for your money from Marvel and DC, YOU MUST READ THIS LETTER.

For some years now, the quality of Marvel and DC's product, what with the switch to paper [sic: I meant plastic] *plates, reduction in page count and ever-increasing price, has been going downhill. The companies are shafting their contributors by demanding that they surrender all right to their work in exchange for page rates that have remained* UNCHANGED *in over twenty-five years. Artists like Neal Adams, Berni Wrightson and Barry Smith have been driven out of the business by insensitive attitudes on the part of the publishers, by unreasonable deadlines, by poverty-level wages and atrocious reproduction.*

Comic books as defined by Marvel and DC are vehicles for their merchandisable properties, Batman, Superman, Spider-man, the Hulk, etc. Their concern is that their comic books appear, adequately drawn, in a house-style, phosphorescently coloured and badly reproduced in order that they can fulfill advertising contracts, printing commitments and licensing agreements. In short, their priority is to satisfy their business peers (who have paid increasingly greater amounts of money for their services) as opposed to the creators who are responsible for their product's quality.

Marvel and DC are not going to change. Having seen their sales flag on GREEN LANTERN/GREEN ARROW *and having seen their lines flourish because of half-witted products like the* FANTASTIC FOUR *animated cartoon show, it does not take a genius to realize that Marvel and DC are prepared to see comic books reduced in intelligence and sensitivity in the hopes of grabbing huge blocks of the juvenile comic-reading audience. As Roy Thomas has said, one* FANTASTIC FOUR *cartoon will be seen by more people than will buy the next fifty issues of the comic book. This is where Marvel and DC's priorities lie: with wider exposure of their character properties.*

They don't care about you or what you like. Ask Roy Thomas if he would ever have Barry Smith draw Conan again and he will say he would not. Because Barry Smith's issues didn't sell. John Buscema's do. From his standpoint this makes sense. From our standpoint it doesn't.

All you are asking for, all I am asking for, all any comic fan is asking for is good quality material. We want to see really good stuff. Like The Spirit. Like Thomas and Smith's Conan. Like O'Neil and Adams' GREEN LANTERN/GREEN ARROW. *The companies are not going to give them to us. Because it means taking a chance that what Neal Adams comes up with won't be marketable.*

Doesn't that sound odd?

"That what Neal Adams will come up with won't be marketable." Marshall Rogers was dropped by DC because his version of Batman was no longer compatible with theirs. Maybe he didn't look enough like his doll. Or his colouring books. Or his lunch buckets.

Something is seriously wrong there. You should have artists like Adams and Wrightson and Kaluta and Smith and Chaykin writing and drawing their own comic books for reasonable commercial rates. Four times as much as what Marvel and DC are paying wouldn't be even close to the money paid for the same kind of artwork in the advertising field. But it would mean that they would no longer be scrambling to make ends meet by trying to do exclusively comics. Neal Adams has said repeatedly that he would draw only comics if there was enough money in it to make him give up advertising.

I think we can get him to do that.

You and I.

Don't laugh.

If everyone who bought a copy of CEREBUS *would get four more people to buy a copy* AARDVARK VANAHEIM PRESS *could pay Neal Adams to draw a twenty-page comic book, black and white with colour covers. It would be whatever he wanted to do. Like Will Eisner with The Spirit. Sounds good doesn't it?*

If you want to see good quality comic-book work. If you would like to support a comic-book company that is producing its product EXCLUSIVELY *for you. If you would like to see the artists you have admired for so long finally getting reasonable working conditions in their chosen professions, get four people to buy a copy of the next issue of Cerebus from*

(followed by Sea Gate, Bud Plant and Now and Then Books' addresses)

All we are asking for is well-produced comic books. And that's not unreasonable.

At the top, I had hand-written *"Deni! How about this as an open letter to all fanzines to be sent to them with a copy of* [Cerebus] *#10 and also a full-page ad in "The Buyer's Guide"?* There is no record of any response from Deni, but I would assume that she had just lumped it in with what she had come to see as being all of the other crazy ideas I was coming up with on an almost hourly basis that June.

Two Adams promo comics from the late sixties (above) and early seventies (at left).

In retrospect—if you leave aside the transparent self-aggrandizement of telling people to buy *my* comic book so I could pay Neal Adams to drawn *his* comic book—it's pretty lucid material for a guy purportedly in the middle of a nervous breakdown, and in fact almost reads as a road map of the direction the Direct Market would ultimately take (while failing to recognize that once quality had established itself as commercially viable—which had not been the case at the time—Marvel and DC would be more than eager to jump on that bandwagon as they would on any other that made sense from a commercial perspective).

At some point I even wrote to Neal Adams directly to pitch the idea, although no copy of that letter or any rough draft exists in the Cerebus Archive.

It was decided—that is, Deni decided and I acquiesced—that I wouldn't go to that year's New York Comicon. Deni was deathly afraid that I would embarrass myself by talking about the above scheme or my equally crazy idea to write and draw Cerebus until 2003. Deni would go on her own and I would

join her mid-week in time for the Philadelphia half of the show (owing to 1979's OPEC-inspired gas shortage, Phil Seuling had decided to split the convention between the two cities). Since Deni didn't know anyone in the comic-book field, I made up a list of prominent people I knew would be there and did capsulated physical descriptions of them so she would have a chance of appearing more knowledgeable than she actually was. For Chris Claremont, as an example, I had written "the writerish-looking chap in the tweed jacket" and she had spotted him right off. For Neal Adams, I had written "The long-lost Kennedy Brother but with a bit of a pot belly." I was a purist about my JFK archetypes and confess to being disappointed when I had seen that Adams had put on some weight between the early and late seventies.

At the show, Deni was set up in a small side room (where *Cerebus*, then at issue 10, would first be discovered by, among others, a young Peter David). Michael Dooney—who would later come

Sim: "Suddenly there was a picture of Batman, his fist seeming to jut right out of the page, the arm perfectly foreshortened and shaded."

to funnybook prominence as one of Kevin and Peter's top utility artists on the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* but who was then primarily a fan artist who had contributed a drawing or two to *Cerebus* the fanzine—had volunteered to help her at the table and to assist her in avoiding any comic-book *faux pas*.

At one point, everyone's head turned as an obviously eminent personage entered the room with several hangers-on in tow. Deni glanced toward Michael who whispered, "N.A." Unfortunately Deni didn't make the connection as the mysterious "N.A." progressed around the room, looking at each table's display of books and shaking hands and chit-chatting with all interested parties. Finally, he arrived in front of the Aardvark-Vanaheim table and one of the hangers-on—evidently a bit of a prankster—said, "Deni Sim? This is Stan Lee." Everyone chuckled appreciatively as Deni rose to her feet, not getting what the joke was.

"It's nice to meet you," N.A. said, shaking her hand. To which Deni replied, "Well, I knew you weren't Neal Adams because you don't have a big enough *pot*."

Into what I assume was the resultant deafening silence, N.A. graciously mentioned "I got a letter from your husband, Dave. Please tell him that I'm thinking the offer over, and I will get back to him." Good thing I hadn't been there to embarrass myself, I thought, when Deni related the story over the phone.

N.A. never did get back to me, which was not unexpected in retrospect, given that the obvious response would have been "Why would I need *you* to publish *my* work when I can publish it myself?"

I've often wondered, though, if I hadn't been an indirect contributor to his decision to launch Continuity Comics a number of years later.

When I did make it to New York City in the middle of the following week, Marshall Rogers graciously took time off work pencilling Batman (or it might have been Dr. Strange at that point) to show me around NYC as he had with Deni the week before. The Statue of Liberty (back then you could climb directly into the crown into a space about the size of a small closet), Greenwich Village, the Empire State Building. Of course the only *real* sight I wanted to see was 9 E. 48th St.

Continuity Associates

The problem was it wasn't on any sightseeing tour; it was a midtown Manhattan business. Marshall had his drawing board there, true, but the impression was conveyed that civilian traffic was rather much discouraged so all he could promise was a quick tour on the way to lunch one day that week. The first thing that struck me was that the lobby/entryway was almost identical to the one in the Medical Arts Building—even down to the Art Deco inlaid tiles—where I was occupying my own first studio on the sixth floor at 47 King St. W. here in town. That was really the first time it had come home to me that, yes, I was a professional artist and, yes, I did have my own studio.

The tour, as promised, was quick and basic. I got to see a lot of drawing boards and tables and chairs, crammed in to make maximum use of the

Dave Sim: "Neal Adams and Dick Giordano's ad for Continuity Associates which I plagiarized for my own Comicgraphics ad."

prime Manhattan square footage involved. Marshall's drawing board, as I recall, was at a right angle to that of Bobby London (probably best known for his "Dirty Duck" strip in *National Lampoon*). In those smaller rooms to the rear of the offices, a lot of the guys—once they had squeezed in behind their boards—would really have had to think it over for an extended period before getting out again. A good deal more spacious was the large front room with four adjacent full-sized drawing boards all facing towards the window and with space to walk around behind them.

"This one's Neal's," said Marshall. As it happened, the Continuity head honcho was gone somewhere at the time of my visit. So much for all the time I had spent rehearsing what I would say to him.

"So this is where Zeus sits," I said, and someone chortled sardonically to my left.

Way Late One Night

A little while later, I had occasion to phone Marshall at Continuity. About what, I don't remember. Possibly payment for the story he had pencilled in *Swords of Cerebus* No.1, possibly the return of his share of the original artwork. Anyway, it was way, way late at night, Marshall's preferred working time, and I dialled the number.

"*Cahn*tahnooity," said the musically cheerful and familiar voice on the other end of the line as previously it always had whenever I had called way late at night.

"Marshall," I said.

"Mmm. No." said the voice, still musically cheerful and familiar.

"This *isn't* Marshall Rogers?" Figuring Marshall was pulling my leg.

"No, it isn't." Still musically cheerful.

"Um, well, is Marshall Rogers *there*?"

"I don't *know*." Still very musically cheerful but completely unhelpful. There was no telling which emotionally-scarred Continuity inmate it might be.

"Oh, well, uh..." What to do? Nothing for it, but to give my name and take whatever patronizing put-down about being a fanzine artist might be forthcoming. "...uh, this is Dave Sim."

"Oh, Dave *SIM*."

Oh, boy. Here it comes, I thought.

"This is Neal Adams," said the voice.

My mouth went dry and my knees started vibrating.

He took the phone away from his ear, and I could hear him say to someone, "It's Dave *Sim*." Muffled response. "Dave Sim. You know...*Cerebus*?" Muffled response. "Cerebus the Aardvark. Ah, you've been drawing this commercial s--t for too long." Back on the phone. "Listen. Dave. When you phone someone you're supposed to *identify yourself*. Heck, when I phone my *mother* I tell her who it is that's calling."

My mouth, Ralph Kramden-like, opened and closed soundlessly a few times.

"Let me see if Marshall's here." He set the phone down, and I heard him walking out of the room calling in a singsong voice as he went, "MAAARshall.....Oh, *MAAAAR*shalll..."

DC heroes battle Warp heroes in this wraparound cover for The Neal Adams Index *(1974)*

Cerebus No.75

That would remain my closest "brush with greatness" for about five years, until June of 1985 and my inside-front-cover "Note from the President" of issue 75:

Jim Shooter told me a wonderfully ironic story in Houston in the summer of 1982. It had slipped my mind, but then, considering that he told me the story a month before Deni and I split, I suppose I can be forgiven for that.

Neal Adams has been working on a movie for a long time. Neal's movie. Script by Neal, concept by Neal, starring Neal's friends. See, Neal is shooting this film a few feet at a time because it costs a lot of money to shoot movie-theatre-quality footage. And Neal wants to make a movie-theatre-quality movie. When it's done he looks for the distributor and makes a few dollars or a lot of dollars. This is the kind of guy Neal is (I guess. I've only talked to him on the phone once…

Forensically accurate, but as the discerning reader can see from the previous anecdote, it hardly qualified as "talking to Neal Adams on the phone."

… and written him a few letters). He's got that Can-Do, New Frontier, Right Stuff, Nobody's Grabbing Their Nuts Over This One, Eyeball to Eyeball and The Other Guy Just Blinked, Don't Get Mad Get Even quality that makes Continuity Associates the Adams White House to anyone who was a comics junkie between 1968 and 1973.

Neal is also one of the pioneers in the field of creator's rights in comics. Neal raised stinks about everything. Who gets the original art? Why aren't we getting reprint fees? Why are we getting the same page rate in 1972 we were getting in 1952? What about overseas reprints? What about translations? What about use of drawings in product licensing? Neal got a lot of people pissed off, a lot of people thinking and a lot of people working on solutions or at least starting on them.

The biggest stink he raised was over the Marvel Work Made for Hire contract, a blanket document which commits the freelancer to sell his work and all attendant rights from anything Marvel might decide to do with anything that you did for them. Create a character that makes a million dollars? They will give you whatever percentage of that they feel you deserve. Legally they don't have to give you anything. In practice they would give you something. Neal issued alerts to all freelancers not to sign the agreement because it would hinder any attempt on their part if they ever wished to contest ownership of a character, a concept, a drawing, whatever. They should consult a lawyer before signing anything.

Very good, very practical advice.

Some artists see things as they are and ask "why". Neal sees things as they never were and says "I can bring that about single-handedly."

(This was a paraphrase of part of Edward Kennedy's funeral eulogy for his brother, Robert F. Kennedy—which I assume had been written by Ted Sorenson: "Some men see things as they are and ask, 'Why?' I see things as they never were and ask, 'Why not?'")

So Neal happens to need a very tall person to play a small part in Neal's movie. So Neal asks Jim Shooter if Jim would like to do it. "Sure," says Jim (who is a very nice guy and wants to help out).

So Jim goes to this location in Manhattan and gets all set to do whatever it is Neal tells him to do in front of Neal's camera. So Neal walks up to Jim before they start, see? And he hands him this piece of paper and he tells Jim to sign it. And Jim says, like, what is it? Nothing just a standard release, just sign it. Well, let me read it first. You don't have to read it, it's a standard release, just sign it.

I think that's a wonderfully ironic story.

The response on Continuity Graphic Assoc. Inc. letterhead had arrived in October of that year when the issue had been out for a month or two (we were shipping late at the time) and was published in issue 80:

Dear Dave:

I just read your "Note From the President" (impressive column logo, by the way), on "two wonderfully ironic stories". Perhaps I should point out a few things before you ever tell such a story again.

I am not going to attack you for not researching this bit of "irony" so as not to malign my reputation in print to your, I trust, considerable readership (of which I am one).

This was perfectly astonishing to me, even though he had been on the comp list for some time. In light of the Jim Craig story, I pictured him dropping each successive issue into the trash after having skimmed through (with the possible exception of the Neal Adams parody covers and issues which I assumed he thought about as much of as he did of the legions of illustrative lightweights who were aping his style)

Although I will remind you that telling such a story to a few friends is quite different than telling it to thousands of people in print, without consideration of possible consequences.

At any rate, I suppose I've had worse things said about me, and heaven knows, I have done stupid things worthy, I'm sure, of harsh criticism. But let me assure you of this. I have never told anyone to sign anything without reading it first. Nor would I believe in my wildest imagination that Jim Shooter would sign anything without first reading it. Would you believe it? In fact, it has always been my standard advice to any artist, writer or creative person, to never sign a contract on the day they receive it, even if they don't plan to show it to a lawyer or smart uncle. So, if anything was ironic in this particular instance it was that I needed Jim to sign the release right away or we couldn't shoot that night. My assurance that it was a standard release form was simply a way of informing Jim that I hadn't "made up" a contract, but had simply used the standard form that the motion picture industry uses on a regular basis. The forms are printed up in pads and sold by F&B Ceco.

Now, as to our conversation, I will give you the gist of it, though I can't remember the exact words said.

Neal: "Jim, before I can film you, it's necessary for me to have you sign this release form."

Jim: "Oh ho, what's this?"

(At that point I sort of remember Jim laughing and asking whether it was a "work-made-for-hire" contract. Whatever it was he said, I think I blushed a little.)

Neal: "It's a standard release form, about three paragraphs long, but I can't legally film anybody unless they sign it."

Jim: "Let me see it."

Neal: "Sure. It's a standard form, but if film companies, no matter how small, don't get these releases, they can get sued later. If it's okay, please sign it and give it to Marilyn. I have to go and get something set up."

It's important to remember that Jim had agreed to do this for no compensation at all as a favor to me (which I appreciate whole-heartedly, just as I appreciate the work of everyone on the film).

I didn't actually see Jim read through it completely, but I know he did sign it. So we shot the footage of Jim, who was very cooperative and pleasant to work with.

It's not difficult to see how the story I just told you could evolve with just a few choice words added into the story you found so "wonderfully ironic". But I would prefer in the future that if you would like to tell any more "wonderfully ironic" stories about me in print to check them out first!

Thanks,

Neal Adams.

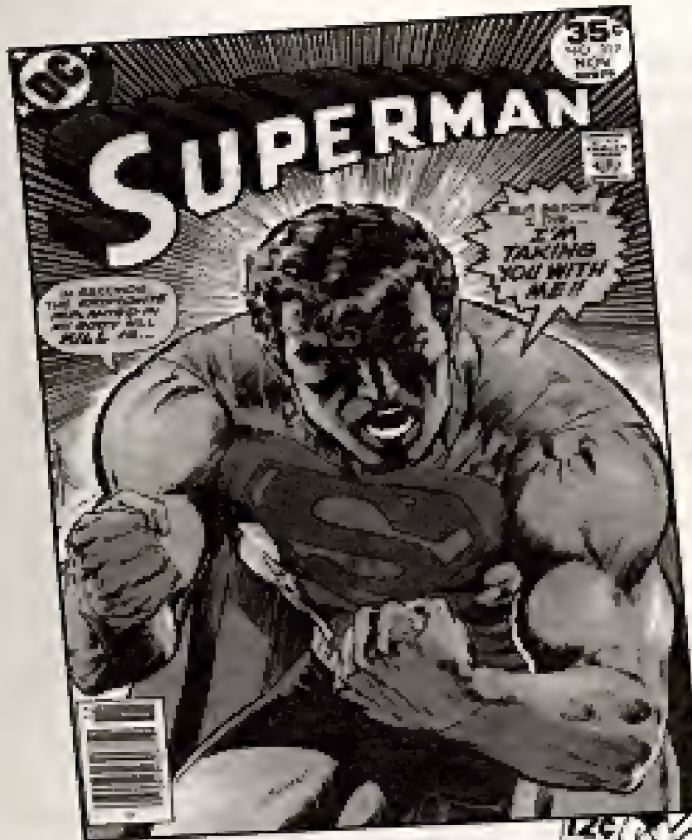
It was followed in that same issue by my reply:

I'd like to thank you for your letter of October 28, since it will allow me the opportunity to clarify the "Note from the President" to which you refer.

I must confess to being unsurprised, but disappointed, that you and so many of my readers took that story as implicitly criticizing you or establishing you as some manner of hypocrite.

The irony that I found in the story was not that you were in any way compromising your status as an advocate of creators' rights or champion of the underdog, but that the adversarial nature of free enterprise has led us all into a world of "standard forms" whether they be releases for actors, or work-made-for-hire contracts for comic-book artists. It stems from the lawyers protecting the asses of clients, usually at the expense of anyone's ass bound by agreement to the client.

The fact that you couldn't "legally film anyone unless they sign it" is a classic example of this. The pattern had been set in some movie studio's legal department, decades ago, tried in a court of law at some point and was now institutionalized as "the way to make a movie".

But what if your movie were to get international distribution? What if it made eight million dollars? What if

Two great Superman covers

all the reviews singled out "that tall guy with the dark hair" as central to the movie's success? I have no doubt that you would endeavour to find some way to compensate Jim for his contribution.

But, much like DC extending pensions to Jerry and Joe, this would be a magnanimous gesture on your part. Legally you would not be bound to provide any compensation to your "star".

And I think this is the crux of the issue. By playing the game by the rules (obviously on the basis of good legal advice) you become a party to a whole viewpoint that you have laboured most of your adult life to modify. I faced the same thing with A-V's lawyer Wilf Jenkins (or the Attorney-General as I prefer to call him), who couldn't understand why I didn't want clauses in the A-V contract specifying that we owned the rights to Journey, Flaming Carrot, etc. etc.

It was the efforts you have expended, in all areas of the field, on the issue of creators' rights, and your eloquent advocacy of "doing the right thing" that has made "doing the right thing" the centerpiece of my attitude as a publisher.

For those, like you and I [sic] *who wear both the hat of businessman and creative person, the demands of fulfilling each role effectively without diminishing or negating the other leaves little latitude in our courses of action.*

Had the "standard release" carried a clause assuring compensation in the event of runaway success, it would, I think, have been more in keeping with the views you espouse and to which we both subscribe.

But "standard releases" aren't like that, and I think this says something about us as a civilization. Your efforts to rectify the situation are all the more admirable for this.

P.S. I intend to print your letter in issue #80 along with this letter as a reply. In the event that you wish to rebut my answer, the deadline for the issue is November 18. Any response you send by that time will be printed, uncut, in the same issue. Thank you again for giving me this opportunity to qualify my comments.

Neal's response letter was dated November 15, but still made it in plenty of time to be included in what was, ostensibly, the November issue. As I say, we were shipping late in those days:

Dear Dave,

Thanks for letting me reply to your letter, and relative to your letter and its basic direction, I agree with you totally.

There is a small point that might be made at this time. I have never really disagreed with contracts between parties. In truth I have never disagreed with contracts which are unfair to one party or another. (Most contracts usually have at least one signer thinking he got a raw deal. Sometimes both.)

I have never actually disagreed with the concept of standard contracts, although they are viewed by some as unfair.

What I have disagreed with from the moment of its inception, is the fact that the Congress of the United State created a copyright law which includes the concept of work-made-for-hire. The insertion of work-made-for-hire in a contract removes the possibility of there being fairness in a contract. It literally turns the publisher into the creator and owner of the work. Any additional rights spoken about can only be rights returned back to the original creator from the new creator (publisher). This is base hypocrisy, and that it was able to be slipped into law, basically in two sentences, a law that is book length, and that it permeates ours and other graphic industries is an example of how a lack of alertness or caring on the part of the people involved, can lead to ethical disaster.

(Incidentally, if we get rid of work-made-for-hire and its contracts, they'll simply be replaced with other unfair contracts. Right, folks?)

Yes, I agree with your letter, Dave, but there's a world *of difference between the standard form contract which I have never argued with, and a work-made-for-hire contract, which I have always felt was a betrayal by our highest government institutions of the creative community of our country. People in other countries have been struck incredulous when I have told them that by contract, publishers in America can become the "creator" of a work and that right is written into our law!*

And, just in case the idea has gotten across to you and you readers that I (and my white horse) somehow stand for truth and justice in all its myriad forms, that's not the case. I simply try to point out gross injustices that, on real examination, are obvious and clear to thinking people. For example the return of Jack Kirby's artwork.

Neal Adams President

Continuity Graphic Assoc. Inc.

Even today, more than twenty years later—like so many of the nuanced aspects of issues touching on creators' rights—the "standard release" is still an interesting and multi-levelled topic for discussion. At this late date, I think one of the elements that had possibly been overlooked by both of us in the standard release "irony" is that Jim Shooter wasn't a professional actor. I think that makes a difference when it comes to asking someone to sign a release of any kind. If you are asking a professional to sign away all right and title to something at which he or she makes his or her livelihood, then I think you can more aptly stand accused of coercively encroaching upon fundamental rights than if you are doing so with someone who is a complete amateur. It seems to me that if, as an example, actor/comedian Steve Martin had been doodling on a notepad and happened to create a cartoon character in the process, he could be pretty philosophical about blindly signing away all rights to the character if a publisher friend of his asked to use that cartoon character as a favour—say, as a company mascot. Again, there would still exist the remote chance that the cartoon character might turn into a multi-billion dollar intellectual property, but the odds are more in favour of it being said that "as a cartoonist Steve Martin makes a good actor" as, likewise, "as an actor Jim Shooter made a good editor/writer/publisher."

I've been filmed by people who insisted that I had to sign a standard release form, and I've been filmed by people who never even brought the subject up. Which leads me to think that it might not be as legally mandatory as Neal was indicating. Sure, any *lawyer* would tell you that you have to get signed release forms, and I would imagine a *film distributor* would need to see signed forms before agreeing to distribute the film out in the real world. But, I would suspect that a simple waiver asserting that the undersigned agrees never to sue anyone connected to the film under any circumstance might achieve the same purpose without completely stripping away the undersigned's own rights to their performance which was the net effect, I think, of the standard form. It made Neal Adams the "creator" of Jim Shooter's performance by eliminating any claim Jim Shooter had to that performance, even though I take Neal at his word that that wasn't his intention in using the standard release form and to which I assume Jim was amenable when he considered the unlikely

An Adams cover for the short-lived Marvelmania *fanzine from 1970*

(L-R) Joe Shuster, Adams, Jerry Siegel, and Jerry Robinson in the seventies

possibility that he might be signing away all rights to a future Academy Award-winning performance.

It's easy to overlook—because we're so used to the reality of Neal Adams as the forefront champion of creator's rights—how rare it is that he took such an interest in the subtleties and nuances of creators' rights in general and not just as they applied to Neal Adams as the top earner in the field of his day. It would have been very easy for him to just say, "I'll work on getting my page rate up and getting my artwork back and to hell with the rest of these also-rans." Even more so when you realize that that level of altruistic interest was founded in his clear-eyed awareness that had he chosen to improve his own treatment and working conditions as an exception to the general "state of play" for the industry it could only have been done to the detriment of the field in general. Which I think is arguably the case with most of the top wage earners today. For most creators today, I think the idea of "creators' rights" is seen as hair-splitting and meaningless sophistry in the age of "Show me the money"—even though I think it irrefutable that they owe much of their own present comfortable situations to the selfless actions both of Neal Adams and of those individuals whose thinking on creators' rights he had so profoundly and directly influenced.

Diamond Seminar 1993

I suppose it was inevitable, but Neal Adams

Sim: "We're [very] used to the reality of Neal Adams as the forefront champion of creator's rights."

and I finally met face-to-face for the first time at the 1993 Diamond Seminar Distributor's conference in Baltimore, Maryland. I was talking to someone else, we came to the end of our conversation, I turned around, and there he was.

"Neal Adams!" He looked at me. "Dave Sim," I said, and we shook hands. I don't remember much of the conversation—the mere fact of talking to Neal Adams in person knocked all of my internal tape recorders out of whack. I do remember that my knees were again shaking, something I had never experienced talking to anyone else in the comic-book field, not even Will Eisner. The only thing that I remember for certain was that I thanked him for all that he had done for creators' rights and that I hoped he took pride in all of the forward progress he had brought about almost single-handedly—most particularly the settlement which he had helped win for Siegel and Shuster.

"Yeah," he said, modestly, but with sincere conviction. "It looks like the good guys won."

It was quite a trip, sitting next to him as we signed autographs for the attending retailers.

Meanwhile, Back at Terminal One

All of that was going through my mind as I awaited his arrival, and then suddenly there they were, Neal, Marilyn, and Josh Adams, wheeling a load of suitcases on a baggage cart.

"Mr. Adams, Sir."

"Hi, Dave. Dave, this is my wife Marilyn." We shook hands. Yes, definitely a flowers type, definitely not eighteen. The thing that struck me about her was the resemblance of her facial features to Jennifer Collins, my last girlfriend's closest girlfriend. When I would later get a chance to talk with her at the CGC dinner in New York, it was an interesting coincidence to find out that Neal had broken up with a close girlfriend of hers before they went out for the first time back in the 1970s. "And this is my son, Josh."

"Welcome to Canada."

"Thanks very much." I got us pointed in the right direction towards the pre-arranged limousine exit as we discussed the ups and downs of flying out of LaGuardia Airport. Very much the "what's the angle?" New Yorker (he was born and raised in Brooklyn), Neal turned to me and said, "Say, you're being awfully nice to me, considering that I only did one cover for you."

The reference was to the cover of *Anything Goes* No.3—a benefit book in support of the *Comics Journal*, which was then in the process of being sued for libel by comics writer Michael Fleisher who had been, among other observations, characterized as "bugfuck" by Harlan Ellison in a *TCJ* interview. Neal's cover illustration had featured Cerebus and, more than a little overwhelmed, I had then used it as the basis for my own contribution to the same comic book, a three-page text-and-illustrations Cerebus piece entitled "Breaking Up is Hard To Do."

[Later I would ask if he had any recollection of how the cover had come about, and I had had to

remind him that *Anything Goes* had been a benefit comic to assist Fantagraphics in defending themselves against Michael Fleisher's lawsuit. "I do remember the Fleisher lawsuit," he said. "I remember trying to talk both sides out of that lawsuit, and being rebuffed by both sides. And I thought it was sad that that whole thing took place. Anything that I could have done to help either side, to be honest, I would have been perfectly happy to do. I think doing Cerebus was part of the charm of the whole thing. I have to mentally separate the two. I had fun doing Cerebus, but it was unfortunate that it was tied into a bad situation."]

Returning to the subject of why I was being so nice to him, I explained, "Actually, it started last year when I picked Will Eisner up here at the airport and then we had dinner at the hotel," I trailed off as I tried to figure out how *not* to make it sound like "I wanted to make sure I had dinner with you, Neal, before you died." Neal Adams was in no danger of dying that I could see, but then I hadn't thought that Will had had only had six months to live either. When your number's up, your number's up.

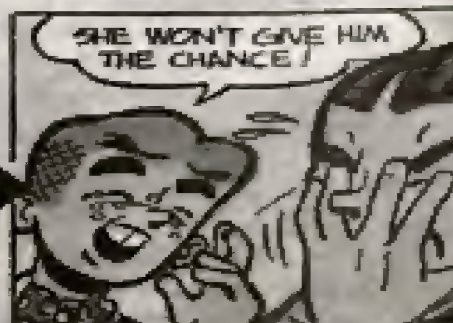
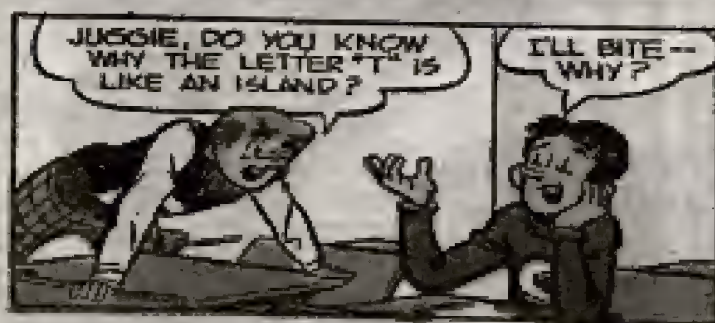
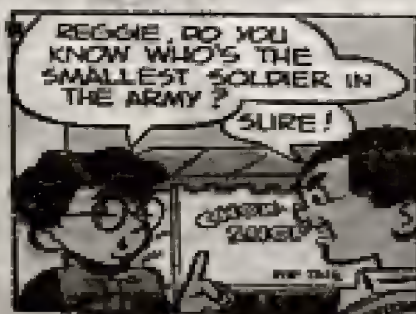
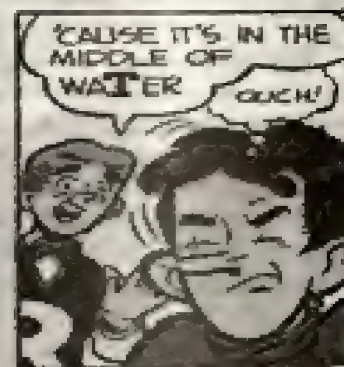
Will Eisner was a subject near and dear to Neal's heart, and he had clearly been thinking—as all of us had, I guess—what went wrong? Why would Will have died when he had seemed so healthy?

"In my opinion, doctors, very much like lawyers, are the enemy of the human race. They are to be feared and avoided as much as possible because unfortunately they are like the guy who sat beside us in seventh grade and threw spit-balls at the teacher. If you think of it that way, you might be able to protect yourself a little more from them. Will had his surgery and hospital stay over a weekend, which is really the worst time, because most of the staff goes home over the weekend and just…leaves you there. You have to deal with them defensively, and one of my techniques has been to grab them by the shirtfront and say, 'If you hurt my kid, I will hurt you.' They're very surprised when you say things like that but, truthfully, they are not held accountable for the things that they do on a day-to-day basis. As a non-doctor you have no way of knowing—going into the situation—whether you're going to get a good doctor or a bad doctor. Doctors tend to use words to *confuse* rather than *explain*, and that really offends me. None of us should allow a doctor to speak in a way that we don't understand. Nothing gives them the privilege of speaking a language alien to their listeners when plain English is what's called for."

Adams: "Doctors, very much like lawyers, are the enemy of the human race."

While I was digesting that—and I had never before spoken with someone who had the same low opinion of doctors that I have—he went on:

"One of the things that you have to do, in my opinion, as you get older, is that you have got to communicate with your friends. You have to be open enough to get on the phone and talk to them and

Dave Sim: "Hosting the Retailer Reception in my suite with Jeff Smith, James Owen, Colleen Doran and Neil Gaiman at the Diamond Seminar, 1993."

A page from Adams's first professional comic book work in Archie's Joke Book 44 *(Jan. 1960). Imagine how different the history of comics would be if Adams had spent his entire career drawing Archie comics!*

say things like, 'Well, I used to play tennis and swim every day, but my shoulder started bothering me, so I quit,' so that those friends can emphasize that you have to find some kind of replacement exercise and dog you and bother you and persuade you that you can't just sit around and let your arteries harden and your blood vessels to clog up when you used to be active. I wish I had had the chance to persuade Will to go on the Internet and research his condition and determine for himself if the surgery was called for, if there was a possible or preferred alternative; what the level of risk was that was involved; and if it was a risk he was willing to take. Most of all I wish I could have persuaded him to not just be this stoic individual who doesn't let anyone know what's happening to him until it's too late to do anything about it. I found out that he had given up the daily tennis and swimming for *two years*. And suddenly

he's having trouble with his arteries. He's having to have surgery, and suddenly he's dead." The forensic distillation came hard on the heels of that: "Wrong sequence of events." Measured internally, found to be precise, and so reiterated: "Wrong sequence of events."

"I lost my friend. I hate to sound so selfish about it, but in this case it is selfish. 'I lost my friend, Will Eisner,' and it just hurts me so much."

It was quite an introduction to Neal. The theme of speaking in plain English and not hiding behind multi-syllabic jargon would be a recurring one. I agreed with him on the subject of doctors but disagreed with him on the stoicism. *Your* health is *your* responsibility, in my view. Everyone knows the right things and wrong things to do, health-wise: doing them or not doing them is a choice.

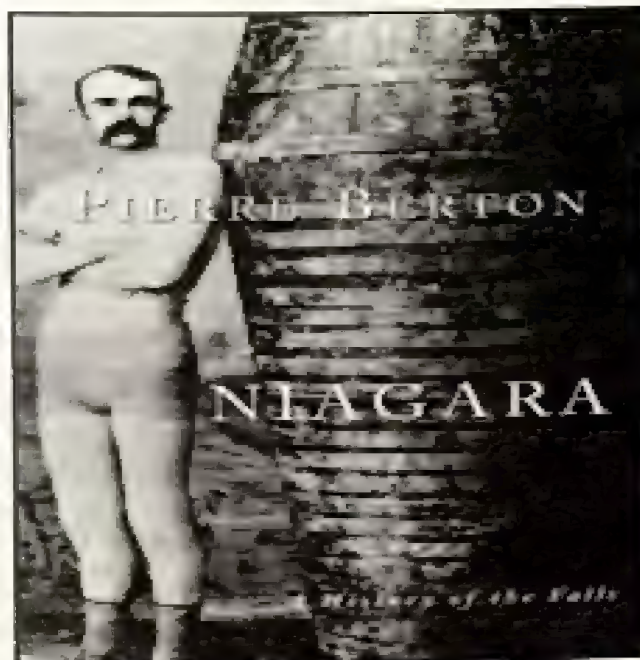
Niagara Bound

The car pulled up, and we quickly filled the trunk with the Adams' bags—except the oversized artist's portfolio: that was going into the passenger compartment with us. As we climbed aboard and made fitful progress into the airport traffic—and Josh poured Diet Cokes on the rocks all around for us guys and bottled water for Marilyn—Neal asked me if I had ever looked into foreign licensing of *Cerebus*. And there: even though I had happily conceded the car's command position to him as I had with Will (right rear with all of the nobs and control panels facing him) I did pull rank.

"Neal," I said, "We're going to have plenty of time to discuss a lot of comic-book subjects when we get to the Falls, but on the way down I've photocopied a number of extracts from Pierre Berton's book *Niagara* that I'm planning to read to you. I'm hoping, if I read fast enough I can get through all of it before we get there."

[A little sidenote and a plug: I really can't recommend Pierre Berton's books highly enough to anyone interested in Canadian history. While *Niagara* is my personal favourite, *Klondike, The National Dream, The Last Spike, The Dionne Years, The Invasion of Canada, Flames Across the Border,* and all his other books constitute invaluable and vivid documentation of this country.]

His eyebrows shot up and he smiled, which I would come to learn was the Neal Adams primary gesture in the mode of acquiescence. What the expression said was, "You have made your forensic point, and I concede the point to you. Proceed."

And concede he did. They were a good three-person audience as I started at the beginning reading to them about the geophysical features unique to the layers of sedimentary rock which make up the Niagara Gorge and which date back to the last Ice Age; the fact that the river, pouring over the precipice of the Niagara Escarpment has, over the centuries, carved a long ragged path backwards, the water eroding the softer layers of rock beneath so that the more brittle layers of rock above collapse into the river. I showed them photocopies of the first illustration made of the Falls after the first eyewitness description by a white European, Father Louis Hennepin (a Recollet priest who had accompanied La Salle on his journey in search of the Mississippi), a description of the size of the cataract and of its deafening roar which had terrified European audiences of the day at a time when North America was as much a Dark Continent as Africa would later be in the popular European imagination; another engraving which showed the collapse of the twelve-thousand-square-foot and one-hundred- foot thick Table Rock overhang in 1850—a

Berton's book is available from amazon.com

The American Falls at the Cave of the Winds in an 1890s photograph by William Henry Jackson

long shelf which had jutted out over the river on the Canadian side for as long as white men had been in North America and which, in collapsing, had almost taken a man and his horse and carriage into the Gorge (the man and horse escaped, the carriage wasn't so lucky). I regaled them with story of Francis Abbot, the Hermit of Goat Island (the large piece of land between the American and Canadian Falls) who—having fallen under the sway of the Falls (Falls Fever it's called—as you can see I have a bad case of it myself)— shortly after his arrival there on June 18, 1829 had taken up residence and virtually lived at the brink of the Falls for years (*"The Porters had constructed a shaky pier that led from Goat, the main island, above a series of half-submerged rocks to the Terrapin Rocks, three hundred yards out in the torrent. From the far edge of the pier a single piece of timber projected over the cataract. To the consternation of onlookers, the Hermit would saunter out to the rocks in his bare feet and then out onto the timber, walking heel and toe, back and forth, maintaining his balance while his long, unshorn hair streamed out behind him in the wind and the spray. Sometimes he would even stand on one leg, perform an elegant pirouette, then drop to his knees to gaze into the cauldron below. On occasion he would alarm the watchers still more by letting himself down by his hands to hang directly over the Falls for fifteen minutes at a time"*); high-wire daredevil Blondin and his rival, Signor Farini who had one-upped each other's stunts with high-wire acts on tightropes strung over the Niagara Gorge. The latter individual at one point crossed halfway and then descended on a rope 180 feet to the pitching deck of the *Maid of the Mist* tourist boat below, downed a glass of wine and then climbed up again to his precarious high-wire (*"Now he had to stop and rest his arms every ten feet. When he was within twelve feet of his goal he almost gave up. His arms were numb, his hands too weak to bear his weight. Yet he forced himself to struggle on until he was within a yard of his objective. One arm was now useless, the other almost so. He managed to worm his way up to a point where his nose just touched the horizontal rope. Using every last particle of strength left in one of his hands, he hung on while drawing a leg up as far as possible toward the rope and then, strengthening his body, pulled his chest over. There he hung, totally exhausted and at his wits' end to find a way to haul himself upright and continue his walk to the far shore. The only alternative seemed to be to drop into the water"*). There's the wonderful story of the day that Niagara Falls stopped flowing owing to a freak accident of winter weather and people were able to walk around for the first time on the precipice itself. Then there's the story of the first—and last—attempt to steer a paddlewheel steamer, the original *Maid of the Mist*, through the treacherous Whirlpool Rapids downriver (*"With a shriek from her whistle the little craft swung out into midstream and shot into the rapids under the bridge. Robinson and McIntyre both gripped the wheel with all the strength at their command, only to find themselves impotent in the raging water. Robinson struggled vainly to wrestle the ship into the inside curve of the rapids, but she was swept directly by a fierce crosscurrent toward the outer curve. A jet of water struck the rudder, and he felt her heel over. Another column dashed up her starboard side and carried off her smokestack. The vessel trembled so violently that Robinson thought she would crumble to pieces. Another shock flung him on his back, while McIntyre was thrown against the starboard side of the open wheelhouse. As she plunged into the Whirlpool, Robinson scrambled to his feet and placed one boot firmly on McIntyre's prostrate body to prevent his rolling overboard. Below the hatches, Jones was on his knees uttering a prayer that he later believed was his salvation. Now, for a moment, the* Maid *rode at even keel. Robinson, seizing the wheel, managed to turn her through the neck of the vortex while receiving another drenching from the towering waves"*). Then there was July 9, 1960, the day that Roger and Deanne Woodward, aged seven and seventeen respectively found themselves above the Falls with their neighbour Jim Honeycutt in a motorboat which had lost power. (*"The boat struck a mammoth*

wave and righted itself. It struck a second wave, and all three passengers were hurled into the water. Deanne tried vainly to cling to the overturned boat. Honeycutt did his best to hold on to Roger, but the raging water tore them apart. The boy was terrified. The whole world seemed to have exploded around him. The force of the water threw him against the rocks that protruded from the channel, bruising him badly. Then his terror shifted to anger. He could see people running frantically up and down the Goat Island shoreline and couldn't understand why they wouldn't come out and pull him from the water. But the anger quickly vanished and young Roger Woodward found himself at peace. He knew now that he was going to die. His life actually passed before him, all seven years of it. He wondered what his parents would do with his pet dog Fritz, named for his idol, Fritz Von Erich, a local wrestler who lived a few doors from the Woodwards' trailer. He wondered what they would do with his toys and other possessions. How sorry they will be when they learn I'm dead, he thought, for he now gave up all hope of surviving. A moment later, still wearing his life jacket, he was hurled over the Horseshoe Falls.

Meanwhile, Deanne had lost her grip on the overturned boat. Although she was a weak swimmer, she struck out alone for Goat Island.

John R. Hayes, a black bus driver from New Jersey who moonlighted as an auxiliary policeman, was standing near the tip of Terrapin Point with his wife and some others when he saw two black objects bobbing in the white water above the Falls. "It's only pieces of wood," one of his companions said.

"Like hell they're wood," cried Hayes. A moment later to his horror, he saw the overturned boat swept over the Falls, followed by two human beings.

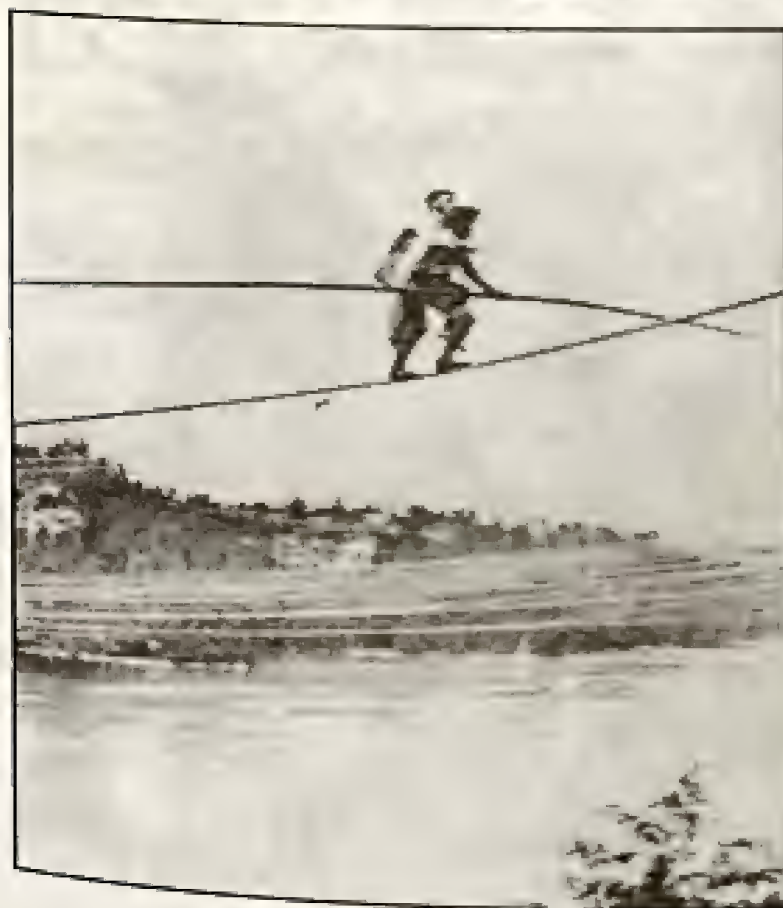
A shout went up: "There's a girl in the water. Someone help. For God's sake, someone help!"

Hayes, who had been trained to save lives, spotted Deanne in her red life jacket about to be swept over the brink a few feet from the Goat Island shore. He dropped the camera he was carrying and made a dash for the ledge, climbing over the aluminum guard rail and teetering on the eighteen-inch lip of the bank, a few feet above the water. "Somebody help me! Help my brother!" Deanne was calling.

Hooking one leg over the railing and arching his body as far as he could, Hayes called to the girl to kick her legs. "Kick harder!" he shouted. Deanne was about to give up, but the sound of his voice compelled her to fight. "Swim for your life, girl," called Hayes. "Don't stop." As Hayes reached for her, she just managed to seize his thumb and two fingers. That was her only lifeline. At this point she was no more than fifteen feet from the brink of the cataract.

The force of the water was so strong Hayes could not haul Deanne to safety. He called for help, but the people in the crowd, watching from behind the rail and stunned by the spectacle, seemed incapable of action.

A short distance away, a Pennsylvania sheet-metal worker saw his predicament and moved instinctively. John Quattrochi, a veteran of five European campaigns in the Second World War, also had a camera in his hand and his five-year-old son in his arms. He handed the boy to his wife, dropped the camera, and raced for the railing, bumping his head as he tried to squeeze underneath. He stood back, leaped over the barrier, and clinging to the bank by the toes of his shoes, helped Hayes haul the girl to safety.

"My brother! What's happened to my brother?" she

Daredevils Blondin (Jean François Gravelet: left) and Signor Guillermo Antonio Farini (right) dazzled spectators in the 1850s and 1860s.

cried.

"Pray for him," Quatrocchi told her. With tears streaming from her eyes, Deanne dropped to her knees and prayed.

In the vortex below, Clifford Keech, a quiet, pipe-smoking veteran of twenty-three years as captain of the Maid of the Mist *had manoeuvred his vessel to within two hundred feet of the Horseshoe, as far as he ever dared go. He was just about to turn it away when he heard a member of a tour group on board cry out, "Man overboard!"*

Keech spotted Roger Woodward in his red life jacket about fifty feet away. A crew member threw out a life ring; it fell short. Another followed; it fell short, too. Keech turned the Maid *in a large circle so that the rope could swing around the boy's body. Roger flung himself across the life ring in a belly flop. "My sister!" he called. "Where's my sister?" On the observation point above, John Quatrocchi saw the rescue and told Deanne that her prayers had been answered.*

Roger Woodward, bruised but game, was hauled aboard. To everyone's astonishment, he asked for a glass of water. The Niagara River, *he said, had tasted funny. He was taken to a hospital, where he made a quick recovery, as did his sister in an American hospital. Honeycutt's body was found four days later.*

In 1990, the thirtieth anniversary of his miraculous escape, he returned again to Niagara Falls, Ontario, to preach in the Glendale Alliance Church. "For the first time in my life I know what God's purpose was in saving me thirty years ago," he said. "Something happened thirty years ago that was very, very special. I lived. Why? So that I could live again…so that others would come to the saving knowledge of Christ and have the gift of eternal life."

"I did not conquer the Falls," Roger Woodward declared, "and I don't ever want to be portrayed as someone who tried to do that."

Meanwhile, Back In 2005

It's always an interesting experience to—no other word for it—to *surface* from Pierre Berton's wonderful book. And this was my first experience with doing so having read excerpts from it aloud. At least I could be sure that they now had a little more background for what they were about to see: one of the Eight Natural Wonders of the World. I looked around at the scenery, and we were in Niagara winery country—grape vines as far as the eye could see.

"Wow," I said, "I had more time than I thought. I should've brought the section on Annie Taylor, the first woman and first person to go over Niagara Falls in a barrel. And she did it at the age of sixty-three!"

We began talking comfortably, just four tourists on their way to see the Falls. Gradually, as the vast stretches of wine country disappeared behind us, giving way to Niagara-on-the-Lake—the quaint tourist town which adjoins the city of Niagara Falls, Ontario—we became engrossed in an extended conversation about the Internet which subsided into what was evidently a well-worn marital tennis match between Neal and Marilyn about shopping for clothes on the Internet.

"How long has this conversation been going on?" I asked good-naturedly.

"A long while," said Neal. It would be no day at the beach to have spent 28 years in intimate proximity to Neal Adams' forensic insistence. "Look. There are certain things you can buy on the Internet: a known brand of socks, a known brand of jeans. If you know the brand and the size and you've bought them before, you are guaranteed that you will get what you're paying for." Neal smiled and began ticking off on his fingers, "First of all, the color of an item on a computer screen is never going to match the actual color of the item, second of

Above: a spectacular page from the first Killraven story in Amazing Adventures 18 *(May 1973) with Frank Chiaramonte inks. Facing page: Adams's preliminary breakdowns drawn full-size.*

all..." And so on down the line as Marilyn peered out at the profusion of boutique-style shops which line the main street of Niagara-on-the-Lake. She regarded him with perfect equanimity unshakeable within her own convictions. "Shopping on the Internet is really an amazing thing. Last Christmas we had this really horrible job at the studio that had to get finished leaving little or no time to shop for the family, and I was able, with my computer, to order a whole lot of things for people that they ended up really liking and, basically, it saved Christmas. You can find pretty much anything you want or need on the Internet. At this moment in time I'm actually ordering a couch on the Internet. It's a couch that is completely unavailable anywhere in New York City, the largest city in the United States, and to buy it by the traditional means, I'd have to travel to some remote corner of the world to find this particular couch."

"As I said," Neal interjected, "We've been having this discussion a long time, and we're going to keep going on having this discussion until Marilyn finally gets tired of wrapping things up and returning them and realizes that it's a waste of time."

"That happens," Marilyn admitted, being forensically precise in her turn, "That happens. That is true, but there's a good percentage of stuff that you don't have to send back."

"A good percentage." She had certainly been living with forensic accuracy for an extended period. "Some of the retailers pay for the shipping to go back. It's not too bad. There's a place on the Internet that sells shoes, and you'd think 'That's a terrible thing to sell on the Internet.' But you can pick any size, any style, from hundreds of brands—discounted because they don't need to have a store—and they send it to you. And if they don't fit or you don't like them, you go onto the Internet and print out a label and they pay return shipping and you

Adams: "I don't think of myself as being a regular human....I really don't do all of the things that I'm supposed to do."

haven't lost anything. I probably do 75% of my shopping on the Internet now. And that's living in a big city.

"Neal, although he's gotten 'into' his e-mail," she confided, "He doesn't really sit at the computer shopping or surfing that much. He will talk to 'his people' on the Internet, his science people, but he doesn't really explore the Internet as a total medium.

"I do it more than he does and the kids do it more than I do. The kids really explore the Internet. There's really no such thing as a telephone for the kids anymore. They're always talking with each other by chatting with, you know, fifteen of their friends, and they talk to them all at the same time. I wish I

could type as fast as they do."

Its being late August, the streets were mobbed with out-of-towners from all over the world and many year-round residents (whom I fancied I could spot: they were the ones staring at our tinted windows and wondering "What sort of an idiot would bring a limousine to Niagara-on-the-Lake?").

"In my studio," having failed once again to persuade his bride of the intrinsic superiority of his own opinion, Neal had now returned to the more general aspects of the Internet, "In my studio, where the mail previously only consisted of envelopes and, maybe, the occasional fan drawing I now, every day, get a box of this and funny-wrapped package of that that I give to my daughter Zeea, or my son Jason or to Marilyn. Who is it that sells books? Amazon?"

"Amazon, yeah," I confirmed. You know you're not up-to-date when you're relying on Dave Sim for your Internet expertise.

"Two or three packages from Amazon a week. I've gotten used to the idea, because I open all the mail—I learned from a couple of bad experiences that if you run your own business you really need to open all of your own mail—I am now having to hand out two or three packages *a day*. It's totally insane."

"Do you think it's permanent, or do you think it's just a fad?"

"I don't know. I'm a student of history, not an expert on history. I view it with curiosity and awe. I never shop on the Internet myself. It would never occur to me, but then I don't think of myself as being a regular human. I mean, I don't like sports and my wife calls me a sissy boy..."

Marilyn laughed appreciatively, and Neal smiled in acknowledgment.

"...I really don't do all of the things that I'm

supposed to do. If someone didn't give me a watch as a gift, I wouldn't have a watch, and if someone didn't give me a wallet, I wouldn't have a wallet."

"It's all just part of being a creative person," I offered.

"No, it's not. It's got nothing to do with being creative, it's just being lazy. I have had to come to terms with my own inherent sloppy laziness as a human being."

"Just trying to help you out, Neal."

"Yeah, thanks."

Neal Adams' Geophysics 101

"So," I asked, disingenuously, "I understand you have some theories on the formation of the earth."

Marilyn and Josh rolled their eyes, and Neal smiled—without raising his eyebrows—a look that could best be interpreted as "Remember, you asked for it."

* * * * * * *

Adams: There's a group on the Internet that's called "The Expanding Earth Society." We have some geologists, some folks studying physics and other interested parties who have—for whatever reasons—been studying this concept. I really just stumbled across this group, and I've managed to join them, out of a certain sense of *relief* that I wasn't alone in my insanity.

Sim: *How long have you been interested in this?*

Adams: Well, I've always been interested in science. I would read science textbooks the way other people would read mystery stories. You would have the experiment, the observations, and then you'd have the results. And when you turned the page you would have the conclusion. I would drop in to the library on my way home and read about experiments the way you might read a *Tarzan* book at that age. I loved it.

Until we got to algebra and algorithms and Latin and eight-syllable words—I freely confess that that frightened me off pretty good. But the kind of explanations of natural phenomena that Physics provided, as an example. "How things work" I just loved that.

I knew I wasn't going to be able to go to college. I wanted to go to Brooklyn Tech, a technical school which *might* lead to college and *might* from there lead to a career in science. Or an art school. I really had to make the choice between whether I should do "something stupid"—taking this long shot at science—or "something a little less stupid" so I chose the "something a little less stupid" which, as it turns out, was my ambition to become a comic-book artist. (laughs) And that ended up being *really* stupid. About as dumb as you can be.

There's really no one in comics who is my age. That was the worst time in the world to try and get into comics. You couldn't do it. Everybody told me and, of course, I didn't listen. My "not listening" is actually the answer to your question. I was able to find a place and eventually make a mark in the comics field by "not listening," and I was able to find a place in the world of science by "not listening."

That is, if something makes sense to me and doesn't make sense to everybody else in the world, I would rather pay attention to me. Ego? Maybe.

Digression One:
The World According to Sol Harrison

Rather ungraciously I couldn't resist interrupting at this point and dragging Neal tangentially off-topic to find out if what he was partly alluding to was a rumour I had heard about, centering on the chocolate-brown colour that Neal had pioneered on the cover of Batman No.245*, *a colour which was formed by using 100 per cent cyan, 100 percent magenta and 100 percent yellow, one on top of the*

*Actually, Jeff Jones had used a very similar—or perhaps identical—color on the first of his two *Wonder Woman* covers seven months earlier. With precise and inventive use of color, Jones created a painterly effect for *WW* 199 (April 1972). Because this was around the time of the First Friday artist get-togethers in New York, it's possible that the idea for dark color schemes arose during these discussions and that Jeff and Neal were the first to get such attempts published. (Neal's *Batman* cover came out in October 1972.) [—Craig]

other—and which I had shamelessly ripped off for the background colour for the Neal Adams parody cover of Cerebus No. 39.

He smiled in a way that indicated that it was, indeed, more than a rumour.

Adams: The science of art and the art of science are wonderful things because they don't mix together all the time, but they mix togethet a lot and one of the areas where they mix togerher is the science of mixing colors. You can make millions of colors just by mixing the different percentages. And the question is "How many colors do you start with?" You start with three: red, yellow and blue. You make a guide with those percentages of colors, and that guide is made up of dots of colour. Dots of red, as an example—if they are spaced far enough apart and are small enough—will make an area of those dots look pink. Smaller red dots spread further apart will look *light* pink. If you add an area of blue dots, you'll get a light purple, and so on. And, doing comic books in the 1960s, what you had was 25% of yellow; 50% of yellow; 75% of yellow and 100% of yellow; 25% blue, 50% blue, 75% blue, 100% blue,

Dark covers by Jeff Jones (Wonder Woman 199), *Sim* (Cerebus 39), *and Adams* (Batman 245).

Adams: "The science of art and the art of science are wonderful things because they don't mix together all the time, but they mix together a lot."

25% red, 50% red, 75% red and 100% red. With those percentages, mixing them together and using them individually you would get 64 different colors to work with. DC Comics, at the time I joined the firm [laughs], they had 32 colors. And I didn't quite understand it until I got their chart, and I noticed that they didn't have what we call "tone yellow." They did not have 25% yellow and 50% yellow, and I did not understand why that would be, because I had done a syndicated strip and all kinds of other process-color work using the same basic chart, and I thought, "If you have 25% and 50% of red and blue, why don't you have 25% and 50% of yellow?" It didn't make any sense.

So I asked around a little bit…kind of quietly…and, apparently [laughs] at some point to save money in some weird way at some weird time they decided to do without "tone yellow." So that if you see a DC comic book from back in "them thar days" you notice that all the Anglo-Saxon flesh is pink. You don't continue to notice it because after you turn the page you're reading the story and it isn't a glaring difference, but the flesh is pink. Whereas if you looked at Marvel Comics from the same time period, it's more of a flesh colour—25% red, 25% yellow. Because they only had 100% yellow at DC, if you tried using that for a flesh tone you'd have orange flesh. You couldn't have aqua, you couldn't have all the subtler colors with "tone yellow" values. You lost *half* of the colors. Instead of 64 you had 32.

So, when the full impact of this hit me, I went in to see Sol Harrison [DC's production director at the time] because I was coloring stories with a color palette of 32 colors instead of 64. And I asked him about it…which is one of those stupid things you shouldn't do, as I would find out…and he said, "No, we don't have 'em because it *costs more money*. By not

doing those colors, the company is saving money." Well, if you were talking about a whole range of colors, that might be possible, but if you're just talking about 25% yellow and 50% yellow, it seemed to me that that couldn't be the case. How could two tones of yellow cost that much extra money? So, I thought about that for a while. And then I went and talked to some people around DC Comics and asked them if they had noticed this. Most of them hadn't. So I went to Carmine [Infantino, DC's publisher at the time] and asked Carmine and Carmine went in and asked Sol and Sol explained that it was too expensive and Carmine came and told me, "It's too expensive" and as far as he was concerned, that was it, the subject was closed. And I thought, well, that didn't work very well. I just ended up back at Sol Harrison. So the question was, "How do I get around Sol Harrison?" So I went to Joe Kubert, who was an editor at DC as well as the great artist he's always been, and I said, "You know Joe, 'we here at DC' [laughs] we don't have tone yellow". He said, [flawless Joe Kubert impression] "Really." I said, "Yeah, you think we would." And he said, "Well, Sol's probably saving money." And I said, "Well, okay that's probably true, except that *Marvel* has got tone yellow." He says, "Let me *see*." So I pull out a Marvel Comic and show it to him. "Yeah," he says. "Darn. I wonder how they can *afford* it?" I said, [laughs] "Yeah, I mean, it's *Marvel*, Joe. It's *Timely* Comics." [*Marvel—which was really just what was left of Timely Comics—was pretty much of an underfinanced shoestring operation compared to DC in those days*]. [Sim laughs] "Yes, that's true. Hmm. I'll go see Carmine about it." I said, "No, I saw Carmine already." So, he said, "Okay, I'll go see Jack." Jack Liebowitz, the head of the company. So he walks away and disappears into Jack Liebowitz's office, about time for a four- or five-minute conversation. Liebowitz comes *storming out of his office* in his pinstripe grey suit, his little moustache *twitching* and goes down the hall into Sol Harrison's office in a *rage* muttering things like, "That son-of-a-bitch Goodman [*then-Marvel publisher, Martin Goodman*] wouldn't pay one G-damned dime more for his G-damned colors than I would. G-damn it." Things like that. [Sim laughs] And he goes into Sol Harrison's office, and he says, "Sol, how the hell much more is it going to cost to get tone yellow? Marvel's got tone yellow, what the hell is going on?" And Sol says, "Well, we're saving money." "Martin *Goodman* is spending more money on *his* comics than I am? That's *bulls--t!*" Sol said, "Well...I'll call the separators." So he picks up the phone, and he calls the separator who is up in Connecticut. The separator hired housewives in Connecticut to come in and do the separations. The brushes that they used looked like the back end of brooms. And they weren't very subtle about what they did, and it occurred to me, having been up there, if it was the same guy [laughs], he didn't give a damn about tone yellow. So Sol calls the guy, and it turns out that this guy did the color separations for Marvel *and* DC. So, Sol got on the phone and—trying to "prime the pump" a little bit said, "How much more would it cost us to get tone yellow?" You know: setting the guy up to give him the right answer.

Sim: [exaggeratedly] "Thousands *of dollars*."

Adams: [voice of doom] "Yes, it's *thousands* of dollars, way too expensive for *you*." But, of course the guy had a close working relationship with Marvel *and* DC so there was no way that he could give

Adams: "I said, "Sol, virtually every page DC has ever printed has been off-register *because our production standards are crap!*""

that answer. So what he said was, "You want tone yellow? You got it." [Sim and Adams laugh] So Sol said, "Uh, yeah...we'll...we'll take it." And hung up the phone. And Sol turns to Jack Liebowitz and says, "We'll, uh, we'll be getting tone yellow now." [laughs] The actual conversation took about fourteen seconds. That day DC got twice as many colors as they had had the day before.

Sim: *I don't think you'd even want to look back over the years of DC Comics to see* how long *they had been without tone yellow.*

Adams: [picturing it] [laughing] Exactly. So, you can see right there that I should have learned my

Though Adams is best known for his Batman work, a number of his Superman covers are classics, including this one for Superman 233.

lesson not to ask Sol questions like that. If I asked him a question he would invariably tell me "No, you can't do it." And not only that, he would explain to me in great detail *why* I couldn't do it. It actually got to the point that if I asked Sol if you could do something and he said "No, you can't" the odds were that you probably could and easily.

The next one…the story that you're referring to…was when I asked Sol, "Why aren't we using the *dark* colors? I mean, it's bad enough that we only have 64 colors to begin with, but we're losing about a third of the colors because we're not using colors like 100% yellow, 100% blue and 50% red. And the answer was "Well, you can't use any colour that adds up to more than 200% because then there's too much ink on the page, and the paper will slide on the press." So, I said, "Well, Sol, we're kind of printing on [laughs] toilet paper." [Sim laughs]. I think the paper that we're using absorbs *any amount of ink* pretty quickly. I could understand if we were doing *Newsweek* magazine with some slick paper stock like they use that *maybe* the paper would slide a bit, but this is pretty much the crappiest paper you can buy and I don't think the ink is apt to slide on it."

Sim: [laughing] *"Sliding? Sliding is not the problem with this paper."*

Adams: He said, "Well, that's what we had to do during the war." During the *war*? [Sim laughs] You're talking about, like, WW II, right? "Yeah, we had to save money." Well, yeah Sol, you saved money by using lots of different kinds of paper when there were paper shortages during the war, but, Sol, now that paper is *readily available again* [laughs] we tend to use all the same grade of paper, the worst grade of ultra-absorbant toilet paper that's available.

Stupid conversation, I don't know why I was going on with this conversation, I think I just wanted to hear what the litany of bulls--t that was attached to this one was. So he says, "Just don't use any of those heavy colors." And I said, "Sure, Sol." [laughing]

Sim: *Don't go over 200% total colour.*

Adams: So I immediately went to my desk and immediately and in as many places as possible used as many colors that totalled more than 200% as I could. Just to find out. I wanted to see a book come in that *slid all over the place* on the press. [Sim laughs] In fact, I brought a book to Sol, and he said, "See, it's off-register [*colour sticking out over the holding line in the drawing*] here." I said, "Sol, virtually every page DC has ever printed has been off-register *because our production standards are crap!*" I did a sky color on a couple of Batmans where I think I did 25% yellow, 25% red and 100% blue—which still didn't add up to 200% but which was still considered 'out of bounds' at DC at the time. After a while, people were coming up to me in the production department and saying [awe-stricken voice] 'Did you…*create new colors?*"

Oh, God [laughs], "Come and burn me as a witch!" No, it's not that I'm creating new colors; it's that *you guys aren't using the colors that you have.*

Sim: *You've basically amputated a whole section of the colour chart saying, "We can't use anything from here over."*

Adams: [laughs] That's right.

There's a Lot Of It Going Around

In this particular instance—as was the case with "color theory" [laughs] at DC Comics in the 1960s—where I would rather listen to myself than to everybody else, the scientific community has come to the conclusion that all of the continents on earth which are scattered around the globe were, at one point in the history of the world, all gathered on one side of the earth connected in one giant continent.

Pangaea, I offered, realizing that this was probably one of the rare instances in this particular discussion when we would edge anywhere close to any of my own areas of knowledge.

Neal grimaced.

Well, it took them about three years, but they came up with the term "Pangaea"—all part of the need to appeal to the elitist intellectual—the Greek term for the earth goddess and mother of the Titans which makes it sound more impressive than it actually is. Myself I call it the "Big Red Island Theory." (laughs) To me it's so stupid an idea that I don't think it deserves anything more impressive than "Big Red Island Theory."

So I had a globe at the time and I looked at it and—using my artist's imagination—I tried to picture "rewinding the film" in such a way that all these continents would move back together onto one side of the globe like (laughs) a giant eyeball.

Artist's imaginations of a feather flock together. That was exactly what I had pictured when I had first heard of Pangaea.

You had the "iris," which didn't reach the poles, and the rest of it was water—presumably ocean—as it is today, five miles deep.

The idea threw me, at first, and then [laughs] and then I was just appalled by it. Being thrown took me a while, being appalled has stayed with me for forty years. The first thing you have to ask yourself is "How did this happen?" Did God come along and put all the continents on one side and, you know, pack 'em down?

It did seem to me to be a theoretical residue of these sorts of literal interpretations of the Torah particularly the First Book of Moshe—Genesis—1:9 "And God said, Let the water under the heauen be gathered together vnto one place, and let the dry land appeare: and it was so." Personally, I do assume that to be true but to be so primordial as to be outside the range of modern-day research. I assume there have been innumerable epochs in the earth's hundreds-of-millions-of-years history that have eradicated all traces of previous epochs so our own research, at best, can only go back so far. This is the same reason that it doesn't bother me that the dinosaurs aren't mentioned in Genesis. Relative to what I see as being discussed in Genesis—archetypal creation that is

A plate from a rare late-seventies Adams portfolio

recurrent and on-going all the way back to the Big Bang—dinosaurs are really "beside the point." I didn't say anything, since we were discussing Neal's theories and not my own.

Did Nature have some mysterious way that it accomplished this? Because I look at, you know, pictures of the moon and pictures of other planets, and I don't see anything comparable going on there. There is no example of an "eyeball planet."

Was this, I asked, a universally held belief, that at one time all of the continents were in one spot? Did you get taught that in school?

No, that wasn't taught in school: that was one of those "in the news" things: here is the best and most up-to-date scientific thinking on the subject. You would be taught it in school *now*; and even as a younger artist I would be called upon to illustrate the theory on occasion. Laughing all the time but gratefully taking the check to the bank. Questions began to emerge: Why don't we have any ancient fish fossils from the bottom of the oceans? And the answer, naturally enough, was "Maybe we should *measure* the age of the ocean bottom and see *how old it is* in various places." So, starting in the late fifties going into the sixties, they started taking core samples from the bottom of the oceans and started measuring the age of the oceans. The first ten years that they were measuring they couldn't find anyplace on the bottom of the ocean that was more than 70 million years old. That was a little weird because even the dinosaurs—a relatively recent part of the earth's history—had died out *63* million years ago. So, that led to the question: where *do* you find ancient fish fossils? Well, you find them in Utah…and Italy…and China. So they continued to sample and then did finally find some areas that they *think* are as old as 180 million years but nothing beyond that. Well, that's kind of *daunting*, when you think about it. There must be *some* place under the ocean—some one square mile—where you would find ancient fish fossils from 600 million years ago or even 250 million years ago. The evidence suggests that there were no deep oceans before 180 million years ago. Which leads to the question: where was the water if not in the ocean? It turns out that the water was on the land because two-thirds of the land before that was under what we call "shallow seas."

I have to admit that at this point, Genesis 1:10 popped into my head "And God called the drie land, Earth, and the gathering together of the waters called hee, Seas: and God saw that good." Seas—*not* oceans. *I didn't say anything, of course. As I said, we were discussing Neal's theories and not my own.*

People ask, well, what are shallow seas? It turns out that shallow seas are just like regular seas except that they're not as deep, just as the name suggests. The middle of America, for example, was a shallow sea. A good deal of Europe and China was shallow sea. Now, if you're an artist and a little "whack"....

The two do seem to go together.

Oh, they *have* to…you could kind of think, "Well, doesn't that sort of sound like: at one time the earth was smaller, there *were* large bodies of water but they were not as deep or profound as today's oceans because the planet *at the time* was the size of Mars—and then it grew?" A body of water could be as much as a mile deep and still qualify by definition as a shallow sea. And all of your ancient fish would be in those shallow seas. What would happen is that the planet would grow and these bigger, deeper cracks would spread and the water would fall into these bigger, deeper cracks and after a while you wouldn't have any appreciable amounts of water on the upper continental plates, it would all just drain off into the new spreading oceans.

What was interesting was that the theory fit all of the evidence that they were uncovering but…nobody was saying it.

Okay, so I'm nuts.

I have to admit that I laughed pretty good at this point. Talk about a kindred spirit. Think something through, find yourself at odds with everyone else. "Okay, so I'm nuts."

We had started slowing on the Niagara Parkway, the strip of highway that winds through the Niagara Region on the Canadian side of the border, pretty much following the course of the Niagara River. Our first stop was the Whirlpool—an ancient geological feature formed by the intersection of an underground stream and the present course of the Niagara, a theory which Neal pretty much instantly discounted as not aligning properly with his own. But he was still interested in seeing it from the Spanish Aero Cable Car. As we had agreed, he was paying for lunch and all of the tourist attractions, so he bought the tickets and we joined the line-up.

The World According to Samuel Warren Carey

So, these discoveries are taking place in the late 'sixties going into the early seventies: all of them coming to light very quickly and my head was spinning from it. I'm busy doing my comic books but still following all of this. So, this guy—Samuel Warren Carey—a professor of geology in Australia announced that he believed that, in fact, the earth had grown and was still in the process of growing and that all of the geological evidence pointed to this being how it all happened.

At last, sanity!

That seemed to [laughs] "strike terror into the hearts" of all these other geologists…

I laughed at the "strike terror" quote from Detective 27. *You can take the Batman artist out of the comic-book field, but you can't take the comic-book field out of the Batman artist.*

…because they realized that this would now bring a number of other different sciences into the equation and when you're in a specialized and previously pristine area of the sciences—like geology—you don't want to do that. Because that brings in Physics; it brings in Cosmology…if planets and

Adams served as art director for a seventies stage play, Warp *(later turned into a comic book series from First Comics). He designed the sets, props, and most of the costumes, plus all of the promotional art.*

planetary bodies *as a rule* grow in size: well, that's pretty scary for a geologist to deal with.

Because it dismantles their own theories of how the earth came to be.

Because it dismantles *everything*. I mean, there's hardly any area of the sciences that it *doesn't* affect. So, I thought, Oh, thank God—there's a voice of reason coming out of the blue. I wasn't paying attention to *who* it was. I only realized later that there must have been *somebody* who was behind this new way of looking at things and that I should find out who it was. And it turned out to be Sam Carey. And there were a couple of other guys who later just seemed to disappear into the woodwork.

So the scientists became terrified of this new concept. They won't tell you that…

"Terrified" and "science." They don't like to put that two together.

…but that's the way that science works. It was the same as in the comic-book field when I would bring them something new like the idea of getting tone yellow or using dark colours and I could see it—I could *see* the fear in their eyes.

(anxiety-ridden voice) "ohhh—you're going to make trouble for everybody."

Well (laughs) that's my job.

So I was really relieved that this expanding earth theory had been discovered so I could go back to

Above and on following pages (through page 37): Adams promotional art for the Warp play from 1973.

just making trouble *in comics*.

Anyway, along comes another group of scientists, continuing with this process of measuring and examining the bottom of the oceans and what they discovered was that there was this big slab just off the coast of Asia that rode under the Asian continent and...*perhaps*...went back down into the magma. What used to be called the magma and what is now called the Asthenosphere. And what they said was "When the crust gets close to the west side of the Pacific Ocean, it sinks down and sub-ducts back into the earth and melts again." That is, the earth's crust is like a conveyor belt. It slides across the ocean bottom and goes back down into the earth.

And Carey or whoever was arguing in favour of the expanding earth theory said, That doesn't make any sense. You're saying that there are these places all over the world that when they reach the age of 180 million years they somehow go back into the earth? Not after 250 million years or after 70 million years—but only after 180 million years there is this...end point ...and ZIP! They go back down into the earth? They're what? Aging worms?

Basically, the scientific community needed an out...and this was it. They had been thrown a life preserver. I, of course, was going quietly mad. I loved science, but this was madness. It seemed to me beyond logic that there were conveyor belts under the Pacific Ocean sub-ducting back into the magma. It doesn't happen in the Atlantic. And then the answer that they came up with, to that, is that the Atlantic is expanding and the Pacific is closing up and this whole layer at the west side of the Pacific is sub-ducting. As a result, in *one* hemisphere of the earth—where the *Atlantic* Ocean is—all of the continents are moving *away* from one another. And in the *other* hemisphere—where the *Pacific* Ocean is—all of the continents are moving *toward* one another. It just didn't seem sensible to me. Beyond that—if you measure the *age* of the Atlantic Ocean, the Atlantic has aged at exactly the same rate as the Pacific. There's nothing different. In fact the United States Geological Survey made a map showing the ages of the oceans and they show that all of them aged everywhere at exactly the same rate. And then you have the archaeologists who will tell you that if the crust rose to the top because it's lighter, it won't sink back down.

I just found out recently that Sam Carey about had a haemorrhage when he read about this sub-

duction theory and he wrote a treatise on why it isn't occurring. It turns out that there are about eight different reasons why there can't be subduction. All of which are too boring to go into but all of which make sense. If you want to read the theories yourself you can find them on the Internet. So, I thought, Boy—they seem to be pummelling anyone who supports the expanding earth theory. And after a while I realized: the good guys had lost the battle and the bad guys had won and now we were stuck with this Pangaea theory that made no sense.

In other words, the subduction theory had been introduced basically to find a way to keep the earth the same size.

Yeah. So everyone besides the "expanding earth" geologists wipes the sweat off their foreheads and goes "Whew. That's a relief. The earth didn't have to grow."

It was interesting watching the people in the line-up reacting to Neal, a reaction of which Neal himself seemed blithely unaware. What he was saying sounded interesting and educational. What they all guessed was that he was explaining something about the Whirlpool's geophysical history and they would edge towards us and begin to eavesdrop. As soon as they realized that he was belittling established science they would get irritated and edge away. Marilyn and Josh chatted companionably with each other. Once she realized that I wasn't going to interrupt and change the subject she was more than happy to leave me to it. "Better you than me," appeared to be her attitude after what had been presumably untold years of Neal's theories.

All this insanity began 150 years ago when some really brilliant guys—brilliant for the mid-nineteenth century, anyway—said, basically, "This is how you make a solar system." There are meteors and comets and dust and all this stuff floating around and then gravity comes along and starts pulling it all together. And it pulls it together and it starts to spin and it turns into a sun and it turns into planets and comets and asteroids and that's how you get a solar system. Sound familiar? For some reason we cling to this theory. Instead of saying, "Well that's a stupid theory in light of the evidence we've been gathering since the 1850s, so let's get rid of that theory and see what the new evidence suggests."

Which is the opposite of the actual Scientific Method which presupposes that the goal is to accumulate the evidence and see where the evidence points and develop the theory from that.

Right. They didn't do that. So along comes Hubble and he makes this telescope and he looks at far-off galaxies and can tell from the red shift or the blue shift whether a galaxy is moving away from our solar system and how fast it's moving away from

our solar system depending on the extent of the blue shift. So, someone said "Hey maybe it blowed up." As incredibly stupid as that idea is, they had no better suggestion, so the "Big Bang" was born from no more evidence than that. Unfortunately for the fellows who created this theory, they discovered recently that those galaxies are *accelerating* outward. You don't have to know much about explosives, common sense tells you that when something explodes it slows down. It's moving the fastest at the point of the explosion and the speed decelerates from there as the initial energy is diffused. If you have accelerating galaxies then you have to revisit the "Big Bang" theory and develop something new which they are loathe to do—they just want to cling to the original "theory" (I called it a theory. It's not *even* a theory).

It struck me forcibly why I had only been on the Spanish Cable Car once. The mental image conjured by The Whirlpool and The Whirlpool Rapids is of a giant sucking drain twirling in a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction and disappearing into a terrifying abyss: the torrential wall of white water which had nearly consumed Robinson, McIntyre and Jones as it demolished the Maid of the Mist. *Quite a show to see from 180 feet up. The reality once you are suspended above it is far more on the order of the shifting of molten rock in the mouth of a volcano except the billows and puckers are at the blue-green end of the spectrum rather than the yellow-red end of the spectrum. What seems to be called for is for a few of the computer-controlled jetboats full of tourists which ply the white water these days to turn off their computer guidance systems and volunteer to be dashed to pieces every hour on the half hour. Maybe it's just me. Neal, however, didn't appear to be remotely disappointed. After a quick once-over of the river, his eyes never left the starred layers of sedimentary strata which constituted his first look at the geological history of the Gorge wall.*

So that brings us back to S. Warren Carey. What if Carey's right and the earth *is* growing? Doesn't it stand to reason that if the earth is growing that all of the planets are growing, the sun is growing, all planets and all suns are growing and, consequently, all galaxies are growing and the acceleration of the galaxies is actually growth rather than the residue of an explosion?

That growth is a universal condition of existence, in other words.

Exactly. As far as I'm concerned you really have to look at the universe "one way or t'other." Either all of the matter in the universe has always existed, will always exist—world without end, amen—and there's no more and no less at any particular time…or the other choice is, let's say that there's something called *pre-matter* that you can make matter *out of*. So, in the beginning, you make a little bit of matter and then you make a little more and you make a little more and you make a little more until you get the universe the way that it is today. The question is: what do you choose to believe? Because even if you believe that matter always existed, "always" is a very long time. At some point you have to believe that something made matter. If you believe that all of the matter in the universe got made, it seems to me that the next question you have to ask is: Who turned off the off button? If the universe was made…somehow…through some kind of transference of energy from pre-matter to matter or what they used to call "the ether" where the ether gets turned into matter… If *that's* what happened, then essentially the universe is like an ocean of pre-matter and within that ocean matter gets made. And if that's the case, the earth is growing, the sun's growing, all the planets are growing, the solar systems are growing, the galaxies are growing and—if you were to look at it through a telescope—all of the outer edges of the universe would be moving outward as if it were exploding. It would look exactly the same.

Now, I'm sure that in the back of their minds if you hadn't had scientists going, "Oh boy. If the earth is growing, that's real bad. That's going to change everything. You know, we're going to have to look at this differently" no one would have even come up with the Big Bang theory. But what happens in science is that when you're on a train and you're starting out a hundred and fifty years ago and you keep moving "forward," at the *end* of that ride you're still going to be on that same train. People aren't going to think differently no matter how much the evidence piles up against their theory. But the evidence *does* pile up.

Back into the car, everyone charitably saying nothing about the disappointment of the Whirlpool Rapids. Back

out onto the Niagara Parkway.

The next thing that they came out with—which was quite a bit of time later—well, they had to justify that stuff piling up. If you have one big, giant island that doesn't reach either pole that, to say the least, seems pretty difficult to explain away if you look at a globe. As an example you had Antarctica at the South Pole. And of course North America and Europe very much *surround* the North Pole. *That* seems pretty difficult to explain away, too. "We have to come up with a theory that explains how Antarctica got to the bottom of the globe." So the theory that they came up with was...that Pangaea split in half. That the northern half—North America and Eurasia—moved, essentially, to the North Pole. And the southern half—Australia, South America, Africa and Antarctica—moved to the South Pole. Don't ask me why or how. Rules change in this all the time. And one of the problems with that is that Antarctica sits in the *middle* of all these surrounding continents, not on the *edge* of all these surrounding continents. This southern continent became Gotswana and the one in the north was called Eurasia. Gotswanaland rode south and deposited Antarctica down to where it sits at the South Pole, goes the theory, but there was a big space between the two giant islands of approximately two thousand miles wide so they call this space the "Tetwys Sea." So the theory at that point holds that the northern continent split in two and the southern continent broke into pieces. And that these pieces will drive towards the middle and crash into one another. South America will crash into North America, Africa will crash into Eurasia and they'll meld together. And chickens will grow lips. I don't have to repeat that do I?...Africa will crash...and South America...You might think I'm making this stuff and I wish I was, but this is the best current scientific thinking on the subject.

I don't know how people can actually think this way. You don't find geologists dragging many physicists and cosmologists into these discussions. In fact the physicists tend to stay outside of the discussion completely and say, "I don't really know too much about geology so I'm not exactly a part of this." Nothing in any science supports the Pangaea Theory except you must, must say, "All the continents were once together on one big giant continent." *That* is true! *I* say, Yes, it *was* one big continent, *but* it wrapped around the middle of a smaller world.

If you look at Africa, Eurasia and the Mediterranean and you look at the Aral Sea and the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea it really looks as if the whole works is just tearing apart. Just from an artist's point of view. It looks as if Spain got ripped downward, as if you could push Italy back up into the northern coast of the Mediterranean and that Africa was once a part of that and the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea can close up off to the right. They're saying that Africa broke away from Pangaea, travelled two thousand miles south and is now moving back into the slot that it broke out of? If you look at North America and South America and Central America—logically—it looks as if South America is moving away from North America and Central America is unwinding like a corkscrew and is pulling apart and will eventually break apart. It doesn't look at all as if they're coming towards each other. Same thing as

ain was basically "turned" clockwise thirty degrees from its contextual magnetic orientation. The "top" of Great Britain is turned thirty degrees to the right from the prevalent surrounding magnetic lines. That was interesting to me, because when I was developing my computer model reassembling the continents I had to turn Great Britain clockwise thirty degrees in order to make it fit. Cool!

Another example that I was reading about just the other night, Spain is tipped counter-clockwise to the left. And if you tip it back the other way, the wedge-shaped Bay of Biscay disappears. You can do this with a Xerox of any world map! So this, it seems to me, confirms the "pulling apart" theory. As Africa was pulling away, it held onto Spain and pulled Spain down and to the left. This obviously happened recently in geological terms because the Bay of Biscay is a recent feature. Cool, again.

Engineers who are designing a bridge to connect Gibraltar to North Africa (I saw this on a *Discovery* episode, a very good piece) have had to factor into their equations the fact that the space between Gibraltar and North Africa is opening up four centimetres a year. Again, this confirms the theory that the continents are spreading out rather than the theory that they're going to crash into each other.

It took a little bit of explaining to the customs agent as to why the Adamses had only been in Canada "for about an hour" and why they had a Canadian aboard and how long we planned to be in the United States ("About an hour") but we got it all straightened out.

the Mediterranean. It looks as if it's pulling apart. If you look at Spain it looks as if it tried to pull apart and it "tipped down" instead.

Country Hopping

I interrupted to tell everyone that we were now crossing the Rainbow Bridge, not into Asgaard (can't take the comic books out of the artist) but back into the United States at this primary border crossing. We all got our passports out—you could still get away with picture ID but we all had passports just to be on the safe side, post-9/11—and joined the line-up of vehicles.

Experiments that were conducted to determine the age of the bottom of the oceans also determined the magnetic orientation of the rocks discharged from the rifts at the bottom of the ocean. This magnetic orientation gets "set" as magma comes out of the rifts which—because of the "flipping magnetic lines" of the earth—gives us a specific timeline of *when* these rocks were disgorged based on their magnetic orientation.

What they discovered when they examined the magnetic field lines of Europe was that Great Brit-

Cave of the Winds

"It didn't used to be like that," Neal said, peering out the window at the increased security. "Passports and all that. You used to be able to just get in with your driver's license." Technically you still could and will be able to until January of 2008 but I know of very few people who don't have passports now just to be on the safe side.

It's a very short drive to the Cave of the Winds attraction on the American side. "I had never been to the American side," I informed my guests. "The whole time I was growing up, if the subject of

Niagara Falls, New York came up, it was painted as a lawless, crime-infested over-commercialized evil twin of Niagara Falls, Ontario. And then I came here with my American girlfriend and, of course, as an American she wanted to see the American side as well as the Canadian side." Having given her fair warning, I had acquiesced. And when we got over there—we had walked across the Rainbow Bridge—

Adams: "The theory about the growing earth is right—it makes all the sense in the world."

and entered the State Park [I laughed] I thought to myself, 'You lying Canadian SOBs.'" The park is gorgeous, natural, pristine. It's actually the second wilderness reservation ever created in the United States at public expense. The first was Yosemite. You can walk right down to the river and stick your hand in it, just a few dozen yards from the brink of the Falls and the park has been rightly described as "the noblest of nature's gardens." There are paths through the woods and across the Three Sisters islands that are as close as you can get to the original environment.

As soon as we were out of the car and walking in the comforting shade of the multitude of trees which are everywhere apparent on the American side (and which are well back from the paved-over Table Rock observation area which dominates the Canadian side), I addressed Neal's earlier question about foreign licensing of *Cerebus.* He was a pioneer in that area, another one of the fronts he had single-handedly opened in the field of creators' rights by going to the Frankfurt Book Fair twenty-five years ago and selling one-time foreign rights for intellectual properties that he represented through Continuity (like Howard Cahykin's *Cody Starbuck* and Bruce Jones and Berni Wrightson's *Freak Show*) demonstrating vividly that you didn't have to take the American approach of selling all of your rights; you could sell specific rights and retain others.

"There are several problems," I explained, in full forensic mode. "One is that I don't speak or read any other language, so I can't check a translation. The second is that even if I found a good translator, it's a 6,000 page work and that requires a level of dedication even to *translate* that isn't the same as getting someone to translate a 100-page graphic novel. You're basically asking someone to make translating your work into a primary part of their career, and I think anyone good enough wouldn't be willing to take five years or ten years out of his or her life to translate a creative work; they'd want to put that energy into their own work."

Neal ran that through his internal forensic concept processor and measured it against his own experience.

"But…if you find someone you can trust…"

"Well, there's a problem right there. I don't trust anyone."

As we joined the line-up for Cave of the Winds, I told him I was interested in getting back to his geophysics theories. Particularly the fact that despite all the geological evidence indicating that the continents are pulling apart, the prevailing scientific viewpoint is that they're crashing into each other.

Neal Adams' Geophysics 101 Resumed

Adams: This is why they don't like to mix geology with real life (laughs). It's bad geology, and the reason that it's bad geology is because it doesn't take other sciences into consideration.

The problem, as I see it, is that the theory about the growing earth is right—it makes all the sense in the world.

But the problem for the original group of "expanding earth" theorists came down to this question, "If the earth grows, explain how it does it."

And they couldn't do it!

So all they could do was slink back to their caves with their torpedoed careers and decide what to do with the rest of their lives because all that they knew was geology and to the victors went the spoils.

And I thought, well, it seems to me that we have to find someone to defend the theory by making use of all the other sciences that apply. It would have to be someone who was willing not only to study all of these other branches of the sciences and stay current with all the new developments, not only in geology but to also study Physics, someone was willing to study Cosmology and to study Palaeontology and stay current with all of the sciences that apply to the expanding earth theory. Because science, generally, is

Dave Sim with then-girlfriend, Susan Alston, on the Rainbow Bridge, July 29, 1997.

moving in the opposite direction—away from broad understanding and more into narrower and narrower specialization. So, I wondered, Who could you get to volunteer to do that?

That was when I thought (laughs): *me!*

Sim: *(laughing) The Renaissance Man Comic-Book Artist.*

Adams: As I said from the beginning: I love science. I love finding out "how things work." But I have to say that I think most people in the sciences tend to obscure communication rather than facilitate it, so I always have to have very specific ground rules when I discuss things. No algebra, no complicated formulae. Don't quote someone to me or tell me I have to read his book which will demolish my argument. If *you* can demolish my argument in plain English please do so. If *you* can't then please be big enough to admit that *you* can't and don't drag obscure authors and specialized books into the discussion. Don't use scientific terminology that the layman is not familiar with. There isn't a scientific term that I've come across in all my years of reading that can't be explained in plain English so my point is—why not discuss things in plain English and skip the technical terms entirely? And what I've found is that geologists and physicists—given that geology and physics are the foundational sciences to even begin to discuss the expanding earth theory—don't talk the same language. In fact, *none* of the branches of science share a common language. So what happens in the average trans-discipline conversation is that one of the speakers will use a term that the others are unfamiliar with, the others will "shut off" because there's no hope of understanding what is being said if you don't understand the terminology and from then on they just pretend to discuss what they're discussing or they take the first opportunity to change the subject so no one can find out that they don't understand the terminology.

The Neal Adams Effect was once more taking place in proximity to us. In this case, most people didn't even know what a Cave of the Winds was (a Whirlpool is sort of self-explanatory) and, once again, they hoped to get the inside track from this self-confident professor type with a rapt audience of one by edging in and eavesdropping and once again, they would listen for a few seconds until the negative tone became apparent and then move away as quickly as they had arrived. And, again, Neal appeared to be completely unconscious of this.

I don't mean this as a tirade against science. It's more a general condition of certain aspects of society, I think. There are a lot of people who protect their "turf" by intimidating people with the use of specialized terminology. There isn't a single scientific concept that can't be easily explained in plain English in the space of a half-minute or so. Like the "red shift/blue shift" concept. You say, "You know what the sound of a train whistle is like when it's coming towards you? Short notes and then when it flies past you those notes stretch out? The red shift/blue shift is the same thing only with light instead of sound." See? That took me all of eight seconds to say that. It's called the Doppler Effect. The plain English explanation virtually everyone can understand who speaks English and has ever seen a train in person or in a movie or on television. However if you just drop "And of course the *Doppler Effect* blah blah blah..." into the conversation, far fewer people are going to know what you're talking about and are going to miss what you're saying because in their head they're going "What's the Doppler Effect again? I took that in high school. Doppler Effect, Doppler Effect." or they're saying to themselves "Wow. I have no idea what the Doppler Effect is: this conversation is way over my head." So, the only good reason to use the term Doppler Effect if you're speaking to non-members of your particular scientific group, is intimidation. "I know what the Doppler Effect is and you don't, ergo I am smart and you are stupid."

And doctors and lawyers. Don't get me started. You put your physical life in a doctor's hands and your legal life in a lawyer's hands and they're explaining things in words that you don't understand. And it's completely unnecessary. There isn't anything they can say in fifteen seconds of professional jargon that they can't say in plain English in a minute and a half. I have five kids—believe me I've been through the wars with doctors.

Once you stop sharing a language you stop sharing ideas. That's a big problem in science. I'll give you an example.

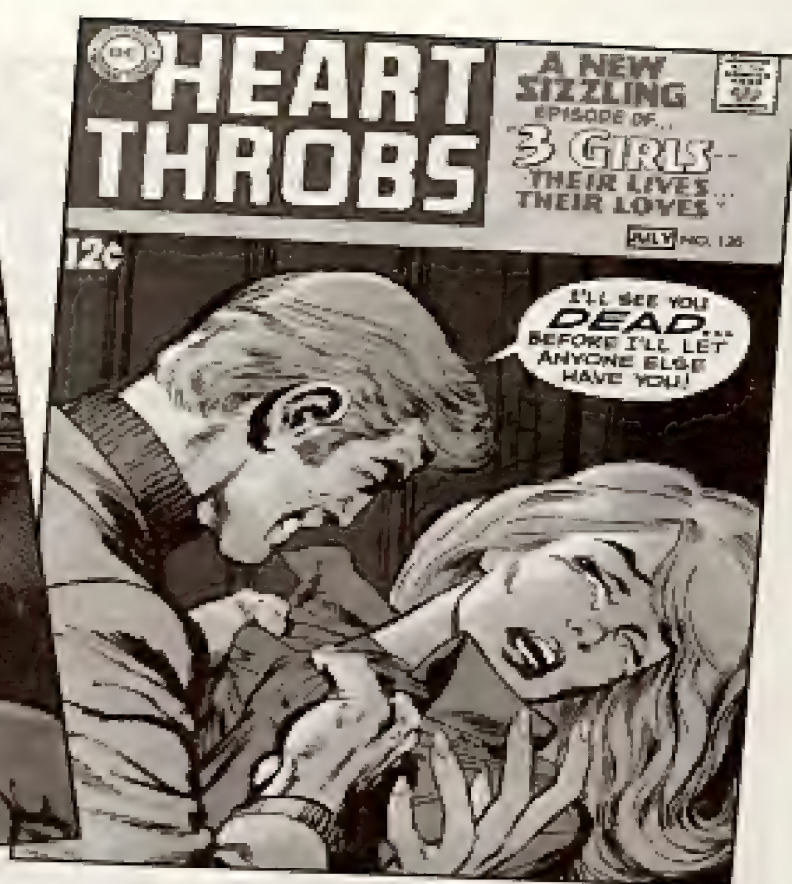
If I take a physicist and ask him, "Can matter be created?" He'll say, "No. matter cannot be created." Then I'll take a geologist and I'll ask him, 'Can matter be created?" And he'll say, "Well, define your terms." And I'll say "Well, as an example, 'Can crystals be created?'" He says, "Sure." I'll say "Stop right there." Then I'll go back to the physicist and I'll say, "I just talked to a geologist and he says

Adams: "I think most people in the sciences tend to obscure communication rather than facilitate it."

that matter can be created." And he'll say, "Did he say matter can be '*created*' or '*assembled*'?" And I'll think about that and say "Well he *heard me say* 'created,' but he possibly *interpreted that to mean* 'assembled'." "Oh, well, that's different," says the physicist. Okay, let me go back to the geologist. And I tell the geologist that the physicist says that the matter we're discussing—a crystal—is assembled not created. He'll say, "Well, that's true. It's assembled from molecules that are floating around in the air." Okay, so my next question for the geologist is: "Where do the molecules come from?" And right away he says "Well, they could be from the earth, they could be from various places, I don't really know where they come from." So I go back and tell the physicist that the geologist says that they're assembled from molecules but he doesn't know where the molecules come from. "Well he must know where they come from," says the physicist. "No, he says he doesn't know where they come from. It's a big hole in geology, apparently, that they know molecules come from somewhere but they have no idea where." "Oh, well. That's interesting. Does he think that they're created?" You see? At this point we're having a genuine discussion in plain English and the physicist is asking me a very basic question in such a way that indicates that there is perhaps no sharp dividing line between the terms "created" and "assembled" when we're discussing the nature of a crystal. I have a layman's interest in both disciplines but I probably know more about geology than the physicist does and more about physics than the geologist does which means I'm able to come up with simple pertinent questions that neither of them can answer definitively.

But the net result of all this is that I have found a theory that does express the distinction between "created" and "assembled"—how both terms can be accurate and how matter can be created and once created can be assembled into larger and more complicated constructions such as suns and planets and so on. Apart from human intellectual activity there doesn't appear to be any universal purpose to existence except to be a) created and to b) grow. That's what the earth is doing. At one point it was created and it grew and grew and grew until it's the size that it is now and it'll continue to grow as it continues to produce matter within itself to add to itself. If that is the purpose of the universe, then I think it's only sensible to re-examine the sciences from top to bottom in light of that.

We had arrived at the front of the line and, Neal having paid for our tickets, we moved on into the main changing room which resembles nothing so much as a military or prison dispensary. As you pass by, respective park employees hand you a bright yellow plastic poncho and then ask your shoe size and hand you a pair of rubber sandals in your size and a plastic bag to put your socks and shoes in and you move on into the actual change room which is made up of long benches filled with people removing their footwear, putting them in their plastic bags and donning their bright yellow ponchos and rubber sandals. Unfortunately for me, a thought leapt into my brain, "Don't Do Anything Idiotic in Front of Neal Adams." And, of course, as soon as that thought came into my head, I was doomed.

So, this group that I'm involved with on the internet are primarily geologists and they're very good at it. And it seems to me that more of them are coming around all the time to the view that the earth is expanding or, rather, growing. Expanding was the preferred term up until a while ago and now growing is becoming the preferred term. Because most of these guys are ge-

Adams has done only a few covers for romance comics, but they still have a dramatic flair only he can capture.

ologists it's very difficult to "pluck them" out of geology and get them engaged with the concept of physics: where do things come from and how does the whole system work?

I was nodding furiously, because I could see exactly what the problem would be in trying to get a literal-minded geologist to adopt the larger view implied by an umbrella discipline like physics. Unfortunately, Neal couldn't see me nodding furiously because I also happened to be fighting a losing battle with the inside of my plastic poncho looking for the proper points of egress for my head and arms.

I have to say that the physicists appear to be having a much better time with the physics than the geologists are having with geology. For example, physicists think that a proton is made up of quarks and muons and various kinds of particles. They discover a new particle? That's heaven for the physicist. Now, if I'm speaking to a physicist I'll say, "Doesn't it make sense to you as you go back in time that there are fewer and fewer particles? That, at the earliest stages, maybe there's…one or two?" (laughs) (sober scientific voice) "Well, no: because we have to have a number of particles to account for the muons and blah blah blah and…anti-matter."

Well. Anti-matter.

It turns out that there was this guy in 1932 named Carl David Anderson who was trying to investigate how cosmic rays work. So he made this vacuum—in a big barrel-shaped thing. It looked like a pig. (laughs) It looked like an aardvark…like a big, fat aardvark.

There you go, we've got our Following Cerebus *tie-in. Craig and John will be thrilled, I said, the very picture of equanimity now that I had gotten everything sorted out, poncho-wise.*

Your plastic poncho is on backwards, by the way. So he pumped all the air out of this thing and then he put in certain noble gases—noble gases are the gases on the right hand side of the table of naturally occurring elements, gases which are resistant to hanging around with one another, they don't get together like iron and oxygen as an example. And he thought "If I just put trace amounts of these gases in there when the gamma rays go through we might see some sign of them." Sure enough the gamma rays come down through the noble gases and they leave little gas trails in this pig barrel—excuse me, this *aardvark* barrel. And of course cosmic rays aren't really rays at all, they're really particles. And it's really several particles. It's an ion. Sometimes they're electrons but mostly they're ions because they're fairly big. If you have an atom of some element and you strip the electrons off of it and the electrons are negative then you're left with positive particles plus neutrons—neutrons and protons are in the center. So you get what's called an ion. When you say "We ionized him"? It means you stripped all of his electrons off of him. So you have this ion that comes flying down into this barrel and now you can *see it.* And what he noted was at a certain point the ion would smack into something that wasn't there. And he didn't know what it was. And out of that smacking he could see something come

off at an angle which turned out to be the size of an electron but opposite in charge: it was positive rather than negative. So he called it a positron. Now, what's interesting about a positron is that we don't have them. What we have are protons. A proton is the same charge as an electron and you make atoms out of them and it turns out to be 1,836—I think that's it—times the size of an electron. That's pretty big. You've got a proton and an electron and you assume that they would be the same size but, no, this thing is 1,836 times the size of the electron. Doesn't make any sense. Why is it like that? Well, it turns out that this positron that gets created out of nothing in this…aardvark…finds an electron very, very quickly and annihilates both it and itself. Poof. They both disappear and *as* they disappear they fire off gamma radiation. So, what do we call this? Well, let's study it some more. (sober scientific voice) "No, I think we've studied it enough, so what will we call it? Well, it destroys matter so we'll call it *anti*-matter." Oh, cool. A positron is anti-matter. Sort of like Pangaea.

(patiently) "Why do you want label it right away? Why not think about this some more?" (sober scientific voice) "No, we want to label it right away. It destroys matter so it's anti-matter. So that's what we'll call it."

I had managed to get my plastic poncho turned around the right way and now we were making our way outdoors, following the arrows to the part of the building that housed the elevators. The crowd at this point was divided pretty evenly between the wets and the dries. Half of us were soaked from head to foot and half of us were dry as a bone (and a little overheated under our layer of yellow plastic).

Neal herded us in the proper direction, not missing a beat in his lecture, as we filed into the building and lined up for our turn to be photographed in front of a mocked-up painting of the American Falls.

Some other research guys a couple of years later are watching the same process and they discover that when the positron is created sure enough an electron is created as well. It's called an electron-positron pair.

BANG! We hit nothing…and we get an electron and a positron both the same size and the same weight. Not a *proton* and an electron, a *positron* and an electron. And the positron goes and finds a nearby electron and annihilates it and the electron floats around and goes "Well, I'm here—what'll we do?" Nothing happens to it. So the scientists go, (sober scientific voice) "Well, doesn't that show that what Einstein said is right? We gain nothing, we lose nothing—a positron is created and kills an electron, an electron is created in place of the annihilated electron and everything is back in balance again." (stops to consider that) (sober scientific voice) "Yay for science."

Maybe that's true, maybe that's true. I say, you gotta be dumb as a tree to "stop right there." Is that how we got all the electrons in the universe? Something hit something invisible so we get a positron which destroys an electron but we get an electron and now we have a new electron in the universe that surrounds an atom and it becomes part of the universe. How do we get protons? So you're telling me that you've got an experiment where electrons—just like all the electrons in the world, every electron in space, every electron on the sun—you can see them being created. These particles are flying around, they impact something, and every time they impact you get an electron and you get a positron…and for what? The sake of science fiction writers everywhere?—you want to call the positron "anti-matter"?

It was our turn in front of the camera. "Hold up your shoes, everybody," I said, holding up my plastic bag full of footwear. Actually, I was more interested in the cusp of Neal's argument that I could see him reaching towards. Just calling something by a term like anti-matter seriously prejudiced the discussion, particularly if the event in question was seminal creation: the way everything began.

Well, yo, idiot. Let me suggest this as an alternative. What if the positron is very much *like a proton*, only it's *not yet a proton*—it's a *pre*-proton. Permit me also to ask: What if you can do something with that positron and turn it into a proton? For example, since a proton is bigger than an electron wouldn't you say—if you could find some way to pack some stuff around that positron to stop it from annihilating an electron wouldn't it then…*grow up*…to be a proton? Because then you have protons and electrons and from them you can make hydrogen and because you can make hydrogen now you can have a universe. See it seems to me that you're *so close* to making a universe and you want to throw the positron away by naming it "anti-matter."

This is what I'm saying:

Let's just say that you can pack some stuff around that positron, make it big and fat and make it a proton. If I could do that what would happen if an electron came by? (sober scientific voice) "Well, if it was packed really big—which is ridiculous—big enough to capture an electron, then it would become a hydrogen atom."

Well, isn't 90% of everything in the universe made of hydrogen? (sober scientific voice) "Well, yes, that's true." So what you want to do is to throw away this possible origin of the universe—this positron—because you want to call it "anti-matter."

(I get it, I think) Rather than referring to it as something more suitable to the concept of something which is "not there" which subsequently becomes something which "is there." A term like "pre-matter" rather than "anti-matter."

Right, rather than referring to it as "pre-matter." Let's call it pre-matter for a minute. Let's call it a pre-proton. What can you wrap around it? Well I don't know but let's see what we have. Let's take away all the quarks and the muons and let's see what we have. We know we have electrons and we know we have positrons, right? Because we made them. So we have them. Now we had to have made them *out* of something. Well, let's say that we call that

something *prime matter*. It's really matter only we can't identify it or perceive it or detect it. But it has the *potential* to become an electron and a positron because obviously we saw—at the point of impact—these two things appeared. There must be something there that it hit. And if you were to add these two things back together again they would become ... it ... again. Whatever...it...is.

We were now waiting our turn in front of the bank of elevators which opened intermittently to discharge a load of soaking wet tourists. Perhaps it was that very surrealistic quality that caused the response to Neal to change. More likely it was partly that and partly that he didn't sound critical this time. Because he was strictly discussing his own theories, he no longer sounded as if he was criticizing accepted scientific thinking (which he was). For all anyone knew he was explaining in great detail why half of us were soaked and half of us were dry.

We'll call it prime matter. We'll say that it doesn't have energy but it does have electromagnetic force. And..."it's"... electromagnetic force is *inward*-facing prior to the point of impact so we can't identify "it" or perceive "it" or detect "it". So, in other words, all matter that we are able to identify and perceive and detect is surrounded by an *outward*-facing electromagnetic field.

A page from a comic that accompanied an Aurora Tarzan model kit in the seventies

I didn't hear a word of the spiel of the park employee as the elevator plummeted through solid rock, descending approximately 180 feet in the space of perhaps thirty seconds as Neal stopped talking to listen politely. I pictured what we perceive as reality as being created, one microscopic particle at a time, strictly through the act of having its electro-magnetic field turned inside out. We arrived and the elevator doors opened on a subterranean tunnel made of poured concrete, its ceiling barely taller than we were, illuminated by bare bulbs behind wire cages. The walls were slick and damp.

Nothing that we see actually exists—all that we see are the electromagnetic fields around what we *perceive* as existing. Atoms in the universe are like peas in a stadium, the matter is the pea and the stadium is the electromagnetic field and when you put enough of those electromagnetic fields together that's what we perceive as being matter.

The tunnel came to an end and we were back out in the daylight on a wide redwood deck, facing towards the Niagara River about twenty feet or so up on the face of the Gorge wall. I tried to think of a way to sum up what Neal had just explained to me. As if he had read my mind, he said:

A fish doesn't know he's in water.

Yes, that would do. That would do nicely. That explained our context very well if Neal's theory was true and we were inhabiting a large scale illusion where everything that appeared to exist was actually just an "inside out" electromagnetic field. "A fish doesn't know he's in water."

Marilyn was investigating the periphery of the deck, looking down at the step ladder that descended to the river's bank and trying to see where you might go from there once you had climbed down. It was a classic piece of misdirection (as they call it in the magic field). Everyone of a curious disposition made a glum assessment of the step ladder. The vast majority of a more sheep-like disposition just shifted uneasily in place.

"What, exactly, happens here?" She asked. "What is it that we're going to see?"

I smiled. "You don't want me to spoil it for you, do you?" She looked as if she could go either way on the question as the deck continued to fill up with bone-dry yellow ponchos being discharged from the tunnel in the face of the Gorge wall.

In the same way, we don't know that we exist in a universe of inward-facing electromagnetic fields because we can't identify or perceive or detect anything that has an inward-facing magnetic field. It's

July 8, 1954: the day "185,000 tons of rock, comprising most of Prospect Point collapsed into the Gorge with a mighty roar."

only when something acts upon the pre-matter core, displacing a piece of it and in the process turning the surrounding magnetic field inside out that we say that it's a proton rather than a pre-proton or—once it begins to…grow…and assemble itself into a more complicated form—a hydrogen atom or a desk or a planet or a galaxy.

A park employee appeared on a small platform above us and gave us some further history of the Cave of the Winds and then directed us to the right where the redwood deck opened onto narrow bridgework that was most comfortably crossed single file.

"What is it that we're going to see?" asked Marilyn again as we proceeded single file along the narrow bridgework into the surrounding foliage.

The narrow bridgework followed an equally narrow path along the face of the Gorge wall for a space about the distance of a city block. Suddenly we rounded a corner and were face to face with what Pierre Berton had described as "everything from baseball-sized stones to huge boulders the size of a house…in heaps outward for fifty feet from the precipice over which the water flowed…riven with cracks and fissures and scarred by two vast wounds made when the rock falls of 1931 and 1954 were ripped from the precipice. Three hundred thousand tons of debris lay heaped at the base." It really is a dazzling display, this half acre of jumbled massive rocks fading from view along the curtain of the torrent of water, each boulder outlined by untamed darting and dashing rapids and rivulets.

Moving closer to the scene it suddenly began to rain.

Actually it only seemed to begin to rain. The catwalk was being pelted by droplets of spray hurtling down on us from 180 feet above, pelted and then swept with every shift in the breeze generated by the Falls themselves. Then, as we were climbing a flight of steps, the 'storm' began to increase in severity and everyone was clutching the neck of their plastic ponchos to keep the sides of the hoods flush against their faces, climbing up directly towards the base of the Bridal Veil or Luna Falls. In seconds, the bottom half of my jeans was soaked and my rubber sandals were slipping sideways and then slapping against the soles of my feet as water streamed relentlessly between my toes. The wind whipped at my poncho and despite my best preventative efforts started seeping down my neck into my shirt. At a point a few dozen yards from the base of the Falls, I looked around for Neal and Marilyn and Josh but everyone was an indistinguishable mass of yellow wind-whipped plastic alternately turning their backs and then attempting to steal quick glances—and even quicker photos—upward at the Falls through the drenching "downpour". The catwalk divided in turn, one course—marked "Bypass Hurricane Deck"—leading sideways and then back down and another course—marked "To Hurricane Deck" leading further upwards to a point about another dozen yards closer. It was no idle choice of name as the spray—still just the spray!—increased to hurricane force slashing in, wave after wave, pelting across the solid timbers which are—given that no wooden structure could survive the ice and snow of winter—replaced every season by the US Army Corps of Engineers. There at the very summit, at the very center of Hurricane Deck, neatly tacked to the railing is a sign:

No Smoking.

You can't beat that US Army sense of humour.

Then the descent from Hurricane Deck to the catwalk and from the catwalk to the path back through the foliage

where I found Neal and Marilyn and Josh again. "Wow," Josh said. "Wow," Neal agreed, water streaming off of them. We compared the extent to which we had all gotten soaked. Some people who had escaped a good drenching drenched themselves by removing their ponchos too soon, water pouring off of the plastic onto dry clothing. No one minded since it was again a beautiful sunlit summer's day with temperatures in the low 80s and not a cloud in the sky. In our matching rubber sandals, we squished our way back toward the tunnel.

We'd get back to our intense discussion about geophysics momentarily, I was sure but for the moment, back topside we were now a quartet of rather soggy objects of interest for the bone-dry newcomers issuing forth from the camera room and we were all occupied with our own Falls-bedazzled thoughts as we removed our rubber sandals and ponchos and donned our regular socks and footwear. Marilyn carefully examined her toes.

"You didn't break another toe, did you?" asked Neal with the heartless diffidence of a long-time husband.

"You break your toes a lot?" I asked. It's always a balancing act as an unmarried man to strike just the right balance between the husband's heartless diffidence and genuine human concern. I decided to err on the side of heartlessness.

"I broke my toe just a couple of days ago, as a matter of fact, just before we were coming up here. I accidentally slammed it into this metal piece of the stove." Forensic accuracy beckoned. "I'm really a klutz."

"What's weird is I had broken a different toe just before we went to the premiere of the new *Batman* movie. So I had to go to the premiere with a broken toe…or two. One or two toes. And I was trying to meet Christian Bale and Morgan Freeman and walk the red carpet and I had broken toes. So it's ironic that I would break my toe again just before a big event.

"It hasn't been a good year for toes," she remarked drily. "And there's not much you can do about a broken toe. You can go to the doctor and all he does is put tape around it. Well, I could have put my *own* tape around it. And the thing about a broken toe is that no one gives you any pity, either. A broken toe just sounds silly. And yet it's very painful with every step you take and your weight is on it constantly. It's not immobilized enough to heal so you basically just walk around with a really sore toe for two months or so." She laughed. "I give the stove a wide berth now which makes cooking something of a challenge."

At the photography Kiosk, Neal bought us all copies of the photo we had had taken on the way in and we made our way to the observation area above the Falls.

It's a very interesting…and humbling…experience to view the Falls from above and to realize that the Bridal Veil Falls which we had just experienced as a monumental force of nature, inescapable in its relentless hurricane-force fury, is actually a thin ribbon of water, the most delicate and insubstantial of the Falls proper. Looking down at Hurricane Deck, everyone looks more than a little theatrical, wincing and turning away from what looks like a light mist swirling around them.

Hurricane Deck of Cave of the Winds as seen from Prospect Point

A call came in on Marilyn's cellphone from Neal's daughter Kris, back at Continuity. Marilyn spoke for a few seconds and then told Neal he had better take this one. Which he did, pacing casually around the observation platform.

"Everything all right?" I asked when he was done.

"Everything's *fine*," he said, with a smile and a decided emphasis on the second word that made me curious but…none of my business.

We made our way past the monument to Nikola Tesla "The father of alternating current" (an interesting story in itself) towards the restaurant on the other side of Goat Island which overlooks the Horseshoe Falls. As we were seated, Neal and Marilyn and Josh barely glanced at it and I had to admit that it was a bad angle from which to view the phenomenon, an angle which flattened the massive curve which was largely concealed by its own mists drifting towards the restaurant that day.

I reminded Neal where he had left off in his story.

Enter the Dinosaurs

The difficulty with the Pangaea Theory is that there is so much wrong with it in so many areas of the various sciences that apply that it's hard to know where to begin. Most scientists don't get together with other scientists in other disciplines to compare notes — nor would they be *inclined to* in the case of something like the Pangaea Theory. But when you start to put the evidence together it becomes very difficult to support a theory of an earth that stayed the same size. If you just look at the evidence surrounding, say, the dinosaurs from a strictly palaentological point of view you can say, "Hm, well that's interesting" and think very little about it. But it's only when you put it together with *other* evidence that you can begin to see the bigger picture.

Adams: "The difficulty with the Pangaea Theory is that there is so much wrong with it in so many areas of the various sciences that apply that it's hard to know where to begin."

It was a good point. Somewhere in the history of the Twentieth Century we had lost the idea that being well-informed meant having a more-than-cursory awareness of the bedrock realities of the various sciences and this was as true for scientists as it was for non-scientists—arguably even more so since they were making assumptions and framing theses that could be completely undermined by knowledge of the basic ABC's of another discipline.

Sauropods—which are those things we used to call Brontosaurs—they weighed, if they were the size that is indicated by their bones, between fifty and sixty *tons*. That's a pretty big animal. An elephant—which is the biggest animal that we have on earth—weighs about *ten* tons. If an elephant slips and falls down into a small ditch, that's pretty much it for the elephant. It can't *run*. It can *walk* pretty *fast* because it's pretty big but basically it's just walking. If it puts its leg down it must keep its leg straight and it can't move with bent legs. The elephant has bony structures on its shoulders to protect its neck when its head swings back and forth. If it didn't have those bony structures the neck could very easily snap. And, as I say, that's the biggest present-day animal that we have on earth. Now logic would tell you that if there *could* be a bigger one, there *would* be a bigger one. But there isn't—which leads to the obvious conclusion that there can't be. Now you could say, "Well, now, that's not true. After all, there were dinosaurs and *they* were big." The analogy that I give to people is that the reason they didn't tend to build buildings that were more than ten storeys tall—apart from the fact that they hadn't invented elevators yet—is if you build something bigger than that out of brick and mortar and marble and so on, it will collapse. The weight on the bottom of such a building is so powerful that it crushes the building. So, until we had iron and steel we couldn't really build big multi-storey buildings. When an animal gets to be dinosaur-sized it doesn't just get bigger vertically it also gets bigger horizontally—growing out to the right and to the left. All that weight has to go down on a foot that's made of flesh and bone and it can't support it. An ant can carry around fifty times its own weight but if you take your fleshy finger and push down on the ant, the ant will be crushed but your finger won't be. You're made out of denser thicker stuff for your size. Well, unless we find that dinosaurs were made of denser thicker stuff, there is no way that they could walk around if gravity was the same then, as it is today.

You couldn't have a dinosaur walk around in today's *weather*, either. If you put a Tyrannosaurus Rex in Chicago in the middle of winter, he's not going to live. Because it's cold. There are things about dinosaurs that people tend not to take into account when picturing how those dinosaurs lived. For example, dinosaurs have long necks and they have long tails. How is the dinosaur going to get through the winter? In our present-day world, domesticated animals are hoofed creatures that have little small tails and fairly small heads with thick necks. And they can sleep standing up. Actually they *have to* sleep standing up because if a domesticated animal slept lying down, its stomach would freeze to the ground. So, on the one hand, there are smaller mammals who sleep on stacked branches and hibernate. On the other hand you have larger mammals that have hooves that the cold can't penetrate to reach their bodies and they have small tails and small heads and thick necks that won't let them fall over. A dinosaur, on the other hand, has to be able to lie down on the ground. Why? Because he's got a long neck with a

small head and out the back he's got a long tail. If either one of those goes down on the ground, pretty much his belly is going to have to go down on the ground. And if it does so in winter, it's going to freeze. Then you have to wonder, what things are dinosaurs going to eat? What do animals eat today? They eat grass or they eat other stuff. And what do they do in the winter when it snows? They kick the snow away and they eat *dry* grass because during the fall the grass *dried* and became what we call *hay*. Now the problem is that we didn't have grass on the earth until nearly thirty million years ago...

Another internal Dave Sim digression occurred at this point, the words of Genesis 1:11: And God said, Let the Earth bring foorth tender grasse, the herbe yelding seed, the fruit tree, yeelding fruit after his kinde, whose seed in it selfe, upon the earth: and it was so.

...and mostly we didn't have grass until twenty million years ago. It evolved. We didn't have oats, we didn't have wheat, we didn't have grass, we didn't have weeds, we didn't have cane, we didn't have reeds, we didn't have all of the grasses presently growing almost everywhere on the earth. That means what we didn't have in the winter time in the dinosaur age was hay. If you took cows and put them back into the dinosaur age they couldn't survive because all of the plant material at that time wouldn't *dry* like grass it would *rot* like most other vegetation. So you have to ask What did the dinosaurs do back in "them thar days"? And the answer is: they had to go where the food was. At that time the earth was pretty much warm all over. But as time went by, you started to get seasons until you have what we have today which is very violent changes of season. But the change to a seasonal environment was a gradual development. So you're a dinosaur, you want to eat, you have no grass, so you have to go where the food is. With the coming of the seasons you get seasonal plants—plants that ostensibly die in winter but actually just go into hibernation. So what you do as a dinosaur is to cross the equator to get to the other side of the planet where it's summer. The earth was much smaller then and the dinosaurs had, incredibly enough, very, very long downward-facing legs. As opposed to reptiles which have short outward-facing legs. A reptile really can't go very great distances on his legs because he's supporting his whole body by his muscles which are holding outward so he has to always stop and fall on his belly. If you see any pictures of dinosaurs you'll notice that they all have down-facing legs and those legs are very long. Even the dinosaurs you would describe as "stocky" still have long legs. That's so they can *travel* or, more accurately, *migrate*.

The Museum of Alberta, as an example, studies track-ways of dinosaurs. They have dinosaur track-ways that are up to twelve miles long. You see them over millions of years through the ages of the dinosaurs. Those track-ways document the dinosaurs

migrating on a much smaller world to the other side of the world. So as you examine this, you realize that the dinosaurs lived on a much smaller planet and they roamed the north and the south of that planet. They went to the opposite hemisphere: whichever hemisphere was warmer, migrating from south to north and from north to south as the seasons were beginning to change. Which they would be able to do pretty easily if all the land was connected, which all of the land was, at that time...

We all know that all of the land was connected at one time—what I dispute is the Big Giant Island/Eyeball.

At this point it occurred to me that it was now mid-afternoon of my One Day With Neal Adams and I hadn't had a chance to ask about my own core interest which was Neal's years at Johnstone & Cushing. So, after a short pause in Neal's narrative when our food arrived, I dove right in. What about Johnstone & Cushing?

Neal downed a French fry. "That," he said, "Is a period of time that I can't imagine people really give a darn about."

Apart from me, that was probably as forensically accurate a statement as you could make on the subject. I downed a French fry of my own and waited to see if that would be the end of it. Suddenly, Neal brightened

"Except, of course, that a lot of wonderful guys like Lou Fine and George Evans went through Johnstone & Cushing. It was an advertising agency that specialized in comic-strip advertising. They pro-

duced a lot of national advertising campaigns in comic-strip form for products like Ben Gay, various cigarette companies, Dodge ads, basically in the time before television became so popular that it overwhelmed the advertising field. At one time there was a tremendous amount of advertising in comic-strip form and Johnstone & Cushing was the premiere company that did it. There was a guy named Cushing who I never met who was a salesman and a guy named Tom Johnstone who started it and when I was there it was owned by Tim Johnstone the son—Tom and Tim, not very creative when it came to naming people. And he had hired this guy named Bill Bennett—he had known this guy in the army—and you kind of knew that the company was going down the tubes when Bill Bennett started erasing the back of the artboards because 'You know, a client might turn the artwork over and see the dirt on the back.' So, when I heard that from him I thought 'This company's not going to be here for long.' This would be 1959 or 1960.

"But, the thing about Johnstone & Cushing that was odd and wonderful was that the owner, this old man, Tom Johnstone, had gotten old in the way that Winston Churchill had gotten old and chunky and…*white*…very *white*. And he was one of those guys who would laugh at the wrong time? I always liked listening to old folks talk because they always have the best stories. Each generation speeds up, so very few people have the patience to listen to old people, but they really do have the best stories. So I would slow my motor down every once in a while—I was the youngest guy in the place and he was the oldest guy in the place—and listen to the owner's stories. Well, it turns out that he was a Broadway producer as a young man and he produced the Marx Brothers' Broadway shows [laughs] before they went into the movies. This is what he had done for a living. And I'd tell other people in the place: 'Did you know that Tom used to produce the Marx Brothers' Broadway shows?' And they'd go 'No!' People who had been there for years. Absolutely dumbfounded to find that out*.

Apparently, he was at the party where Fatty Arbuckle had his fatal run-in with the girl and the Coke bottle—Tom said it was a champagne bottle. In fact Tom said that he drove Fatty Arbuckle *to* the party. And evidently at some point as a way of gaining a certain amount of financial security he and this other fellow had decided to found Johnstone & Cushing.

Because of his brother Will, he knew a lot of cartoonists and it just turned out to be a good business for him to get into. Comic strips and comic-strip cartooning in those days, before the s--t hit the fan, were actually a pretty secure place to make a living. The top newspaper cartoonists were very wealthy men and virtually all syndicated cartoonists were pretty well off.

I mean, when I was first invited to the National Cartoonists Society they had some kind of a 'dinner'—where you're supposed to wear a tuxedo or a very good suit—and there were all these old cartoonists and they would be smoking the biggest cigars you'd ever want to see and they'd be wearing tuxedos and they'd be drinking wine and giving themselves awards. And I thought, boy, if there's any place that I never want to join [laughs] this is the place. The old boy's club."

"As you said in the *Comic Book Artist* interview, 'I didn't think I could get that old that fast.'" It was a great line and I had laughed out loud the first time I had read it.

Neal was more conciliatory this time out. "They were all great fellas, but they drank and they smoked and I was all of nineteen years old and I wasn't about to drink or smoke or wear a tuxedo. I sort of shuffled my feet and said, 'Thanks for inviting me, I'll have to think about it.' And, of course, I didn't have to think about it for half a second."

The Button-Down World Of the NCS

Sim: *You weren't a golfer, either.*

Adams: I wasn't a golfer, I didn't drive—as you already know—I didn't smoke or drink.

Sim: *That pretty much lets out the NCS.*

Adams: One of the first things I heard at the meeting was "We don't have many comic *book* artists." They had Gil Kane. And I met Gil Kane. Very nice guy, tall fellow. I hit it off with him right away.

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*According to Glenn Mitchell's *The Marx Bros. Encyclopedia* the connection was a little more tenuous than that:

"Chico's talent for pleasant coincidence led to a chance meeting with one Tom Johnstone in New York. They were outside the Palace Theatre and when Johnstone inquired what Chico was doing he said, 'Nothing, and I don't even think I'm allowed to stand here.'"

He ultimately introduced Chico to producer Joseph M. Gaites who had, around the same time, met a coal millionaire named James P. Beury who had bought a theatre and was looking to dabble in show business. The result was the Marx Bros. revue *I'll Say She Is!* becoming a reality, incorporating the overall plot of a failed production *Give Me a Thrill* including music by Tom Johnstone and Book & Lyrics by his brother, cartoonist (!) Will B. Johnstone. Although Will B. Johnstone, in between his cartooning, would have intermittent connections with the Marx Bros.—including ultimately suing them to obtain a screen credit on *Horse Feathers* after material he had written for *I'll Say She Is!* had been incorporated into the film—Tom Johnstone's only connection (critical as it was at a point when the Marx Bros. were seriously considering quitting show business) was introducing Chico to Joseph M. Gaites and adapting *Give Me a Thrill* into *I'll Say She Is*. It notes that Tom Johnstone died in 1970, aged 81.

One of a series of ads for Capitol Tapes from the seventies

And they didn't really like comic-book artists and, in fact, the year after that I got a syndicated strip they invited me back. And I thought, 'The reason they're inviting me back is because I have a syndicated strip now' and that didn't seem quite right to me. I was able to get the NCS' help when I was fighting for Siegel & Shuster and I was very happy about that and they certainly redeemed themselves in my eyes on that day. Individually? They were all great guys. Each one of them was terrific. As a group? No, they were breaking their arms patting themselves on the back.

Anyway, after I had been doing Archie pages freelance for a while, I was looking for some other work and I heard that there was a guy named Howard Nostrand who was doing a comic strip based on the *Bat Masterson* television show. And he had a studio so he brought me in and he offered me 10% of the strip or I could take fifty dollars a week. One or the other. And I was already making money on Archie, so I figured I'd take a gamble. My mother would say, "Take a percentage." So I did. I worked on the strip for three months, worked like a dog and, in fact, did most of the work because Howard had other commercial jobs that he spent most of his time on and I helped him on those too. Those three months were the most intensive learning experience in my life. I learned so much in those three months about drawing and about the ins and outs of syndicated cartooning and commercial work. At

the end of those three months Howard learned how much money he was going to get and decided that he didn't want to do the strip anymore. It really didn't matter to me how much *Howard* got. What mattered to me was how much *I* got for my 10%. It turned out that I got $9 a week. [laughs] One of the great lessons of *my* life: sometimes it's not so good to take a percentage.

Anyway, the studio actually had four artists. There was a guy named Red Sudek who was a re-toucher—a really good re-toucher—there was Howard who would stay up all night and listen to jazz music and drink wine and I learned a lot about jazz from him. And then there was a Spanish-American re-toucher and then there was Elmer Wexler. Elmer Wexler was a very nattily dressed, healthy ex-Marine who always came in at 8:30 in the morning and who always left at 4:30 to get on the train to go up to Westport, Connecticut and who lived a very reasonable, modest, humble life with his wife and two kids. Always seemed happy, was always healthy, never drank to excess—I don't know if he ever drank at all. Did not smoke. When I compared him to Howard Nostrand— who was close as you would want to be to getting a pacemaker in his chest and still be walking around—he seemed to me to be the antithesis of Howard. Smart guy. A very smart guy who understood how to conduct his life. So I have to say that the difference was that while I *liked* Howard, I *admired and respected* Elmer. And if I was to analyze my own life, I would have to say that it sits somewhere between the two of them: sometimes leaning toward Howard and sometimes leaning toward Elmer.

Elmer worked for Johnstone & Cushing doing comics for advertising and he got paid pretty well for it and I thought, "Well, the strip is over, I'm going to have to try to get work again." And I was no longer doing my work for Archie and I was starting to pick up some commercial jobs—which wasn't so easy. It was kind of tough. But, at one point I decided I would try to do a sample of a commercial comic-strip advertisement. And I did my sample—took me half a week to do. And I took it to Elmer and I asked if I could please get his opinion, his criticism of it. And, of course, today I get lots of opportunities to critique artists' works and I fear it and I hate it, I hate to do it."

I was down to my last few French fries and ordered a decaf coffee, mentally picturing for the first time the other side of the situation that had left Jim Craig trembling with anger and embarrassment.

"I'm sure Elmer had the same fear and loathing that I have for doing this particular heinous job. But, he knew me from the studio, I had been there for three months, he would talk to me now and then, *briefly*. And if I extended the conversation beyond maybe a sentence or two, he would *look at his watch.*"

I laughed.

"Which was his way of reminding me that I was taking up his time because he had to catch the 4:30 train. So, why am I talking to him? Why don't you come over and talk to me at *lunch* time, when I'm *eating* and not *working*? Ooooo-kay [laughs] So I pretty much learned the rules: I was imposing upon him to show him this work that I had done. So he said, Okay, I can spare a minute. He looked at the work and he said, 'I can't criticize this, because it would take me all day to tell you all the things that are wrong with it.' Oooo-kay [laughs]. I said, 'You can't tell me anything?' He said, 'No, I just told you. It would take me all day to tell you all the things that are wrong with it.' Ooo-kay. So I backed out of the room and I went home. And after I got over [laughs] the *tragedy* of this meeting, I realized that he was probably telling me the truth. What was wrong with me that I was bringing him something that would absorb that much of his time? So, I looked at what I had done and, yes, I had screwed up. I had not done all the things I should have done. I beat myself up mentally as much as I could: reminding myself of things that I should have known, that I should have realized and I should have understood."

I have to confess that I was enjoying this a

Adams drew three issues of The Adventures of Jerry Lewis *for DC Comics in the late sixties.*

little too much on behalf of Jim Craig and my own traumatized and intimidated self of thirty years before. "Can you give me three examples just off the top of your head?" I asked, emptying a packet of sweetener into my decaf.

"Oh, I *am*," Neal laughed with the palpable relief still evident more than forty years after his own traumatizing and intimidating episode which he would never have to endure again in this lifetime. He ticked them off on his fingers, 'Do better reference, do better reference, do better reference.'" I laughed appreciatively. "Oh, and 'think'," he added. "That's the fourth one: 'think.' If you want to be an artist you have to *think*. It's a job requirement.

"See, my first attempt had been a cigarette ad, whose premise had been that these guys are blowing up the side of a mountain and throwing the dynamite incorrectly and the guys almost got killed. And as I looked at it more critically after my talk with Elmer, I saw that all that was there in the form of backgrounds was a truck in one panel and a hillside of dirt. Those were my backgrounds. And I realized, 'Well, that's just lazy.' So, why don't I do a television studio instead? Someone's robbing the payroll of this television production studio. Which would never happen, but it wasn't bad as a comic-strip premise. I had to research a television studio, a television camera, what someone looks like shooting a television camera, the scene that they were shooting which was a suspended bathtub full of water. Running action—I needed to find a photo of a basketball player running and falling on the basketball court and use that for the "tripping" shot, I needed to find reference for a gun, find reference for a TV camera—I needed to do all this very specific research and then I needed to put it all together into something that was halfway decent. *Not* a dirt hillside. And I did. And when I was done, I had to agree that everything he had said to me in that one sentence was true. It would have taken him a day to teach me all of the things that I had now learned all by myself.

"So, about two weeks after the first attempt—it took me at least a week to do the thing, the research and everything else—I brought the new piece to Elmer and, of course, he looked at me with arched eyebrow when I came in, it was a look that said, 'Okay, he's going to make *this* mistake all over again.'"

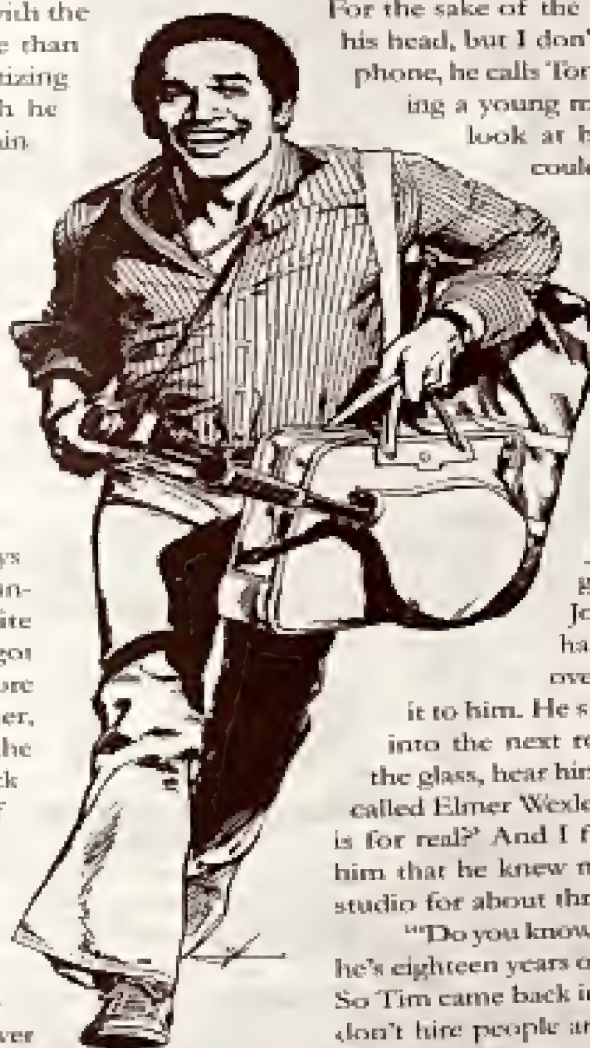
I laughed.

"So, I apologized for coming by unannounced and asked him if he would please look at it. So I took it out and I handed it to him and he looked at it for a minute. I don't know if he nodded his head. For the sake of the story, we'll say that he nodded his head, but I don't think he did. He picks up the phone, he calls Tom or Tim and he says, 'I'm sending a young man over to you. I want you to look at his work because I think you could probably use him over there.' And then, off the phone, he said to me, 'Here, I'm going to write down this address. This is Johnstone & Cushing.' And I took the piece of paper... *stunned*...because he hadn't said anything about the art. Apparently I had passed the test, whatever it was. And I took the piece over to Johnstone & Cushing. When I got there, I asked to see Tim Johnstone saying Elmer Wexler had recommended that I come over. Took out the work, showed it to him. He said, 'Hold on a second.' Walked into the next room. I could see him through the glass, hear him pick up the phone—*click*—he called Elmer Wexler and said 'Are you sure this kid is for real?' And I found out later that Elmer told him that he knew me, that I had been around the studio for about three months.

"'Do you know he's eighteen years old?' 'I know he's eighteen years old. You can see what he can do.' So Tim came back into the room and said, 'Well, we don't hire people around here, but we have a desk for you, and we can give you work.' And I said," Neal laughed with what I would guess was the same unvarnished delight with which he had laughed back in 1960, "'I'll take it.' And I started doing pages for *Boy's Life* magazine. In those days, the page rate at DC Comics was $40 a page for pencils, 20 to $25 a page for inks. I got $200 a page at Johnstone & Cushing. Eighteen years old." He shook his head in amazed retrospect at those two facts existing in proximity to each other. "Of course, I had to go through the hell of Elmer Wexler," another laugh of profound relief, "But I got there."

Frank & Bill

"And I have to say that I have used the same approach on other young artists. Frank Miller. 'Frank, I can't look at this work, it would take me all day to tell you what's wrong with it.'"

This was a new wrinkle on the story. *Frank Miller* had gotten the Jim Craig treatment? "Did his face fall?" I couldn't help but asking, like a rubbernecker slowing down on the way past a traffic accident.

Neal Adams: "When I was doing Bat Masterson *I was working in Howard Nostrand's style."*

Neal's expression was a studied merging of complete empathy combined with forensic matter-of-factness, "Oh. On the floor. *But!*" The empathy vanished leaving only the matter-of-factness, "He came back and he came back and he came back. And he turned into the most surprising story I've ever been able to tell when it comes to critiquing young artists.

"And it wasn't just him. Bill Sienkiewicz came in with his work. He showed it to me. I flipped through the portfolio. I picked up the phone. I called Jim Shooter at Marvel and I said, 'I have an artist for you. I'm going to send him over. You can give him a script the moment he walks in the door.' I sent Sienkiewicz over there, didn't see him again for a year."

I laughed maybe a little too loudly at that, having known Bill since the mid-80s.

"S—t happens," he said, with nary a crack in his forensic matter-of-factness in these areas.

"Yep," I agreed, although 's—t happens' is about as far from my personal philosophy as you can get. I chose to leave it alone as forensically accurate in this case, even as I attempted to switch gears. "Well, he was certainly..."

I hesitated. Bill was certainly what?

"In a field where every newcomer was trying to look like Neal Adams..."

Neal interrupted what he anticipated would be a well-worn and inaccurate "spin" on the story. "I think that you're picking the wrong part of the story to focus on there. The important thing was that he was good enough to be a professional when he walked in the door. The fact that his stuff looked like Neal's was a big surprise to everybody else but no surprise to him."

Being completely unaware of the 'spin' which had dominated the subject in Neal's life, I attempted to establish that I wasn't criticizing Bill's choices. I was in the same category of trying to look like Neal and I was curious about what Bill Sienkiewicz as the most successful of the 'Neal clones'—most successful by a wide margin—had looked like to the real article. "But, wasn't it an amazing experience for you to look at Bill's work from that standpoint? I mean, you must have been aware of everyone trying to do your style and to have someone who could not only do the cosmetics but was capable of doing the thinking behind it..."

It was, I think, an unexpected avenue of inquiry. I had forgotten how quickly being an "Adams clone" had become a pejorative through the Crusty Bunkers time period and how much Bill himself had to fight against being seen as being merely an "Adams clone." To me there was a world of difference between tracing figures from *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* and being able to think through a Neal Adams style page from composition to layout to tight pencilling to inking without missing a beat as Bill had proved himself capable of doing on *Moon Knight*.

"Well, it was certainly one of the early surprises of seeing that. I didn't think anything of it. I was surprised. '*Whoa! What the hell is this?*'"

The four recollections had spilled out in

Bill Sienkiewicz's unused cover for Moon Knight 9

Adams movie poster art

lockstep, attempting to frame a forensically accurate response between them. Somewhat unsatisfied with the results, he mulled it over and moved forward a bit in his recollection.

"But, immediately, once that thought occurred to me it was superseded by 'Yeah, but he's doing a great job.' So? He ought to get work. There was no way that the fact that he was drawing like me should stop him from getting work."

Having addressed my question to the forensic best of his abilities, he returned to shadow-boxing with the paper tiger (to badly mix a metaphor), the more negative assessment of Sienkiewicz that people had evidently been trying to get out of him for years.

"People act as if that's a surprise. Most guys in comic strips got their first work ghosting for other artists where drawing like that artist is a job requirement. That was how you used to get work. You imi-

tated the other guy's style and he hired you to do a couple of weeks of stuff or he made you his assistant. When I was doing *Bat Masterson,* I was working in Howard Nostrand's style. When I was working for a number of Johnstone & Cushing clients I was working in Tom Scheuer's style. In fact, in some advertising work I worked in Elmer Wexler's style because it was required. When people ask me, I'm always surprised at the question. It seems to me more of a question of 'Why would that *upset* me?'. . ."

This was Alice in Wonderland territory for me. Had people actually been asking him for years if Bill's style had *upset* him? It would never have occurred to me.

". . .because there are people who ask the question implying that I would be upset and second of all people ask the question as if I would be surprised. 'Why would that *surprise* me?' It's the way most art fields have always worked. If you get to a certain level of ability, people are going to imitate your work. They feel they're learning. Some of them are and some of them aren't, but they feel they are. Are they doing it for malicious reasons? Of course not. That would be ridiculous. I did it. Everybody did it. It's the history of art."

My question had been posed more along the lines of: "Had Bill actually achieved the level he had appeared to achieve? As the creator of the style in question, were there elements that you thought Bill had gotten more right and conversely were there elements that he had gotten less wrong?" Both Bill and Neal were so far above me in terms of pure ability that I thought only Neal could answer that question. But the moment passed as I tried to get my mind wrapped around the idea of Neal being either upset or surprised that the ultimate Neal clone had shown up with samples of his work.

Adams: "When you use a brush... you work by eye—you see where the brush hits the paper. When you use a pen point...the line comes more from the pressure of the pen."

"But, getting back to Johnstone & Cushing, it was a bit of a surprise because I turned out to be this monster. I would smile at everybody, but I was this wholesome Midwestern-style kid and I would argue when argument was called for and shut up when I was told to shut up, but when I sat down to the desk, I would suck things in like a black hole. I would learn from everybody and the result was that I got the best jobs. At eighteen. And then nineteen. And getting the best jobs, I learned a lot of things. I learned how to break down and dialogue advertising comic books, how to do layouts that other people would turn into pages, how to be clear and how to make things clearer. And everybody tried to dislike me, but nobody really succeeded because basically I was just this goofy young kid who would ask questions of everybody and I wouldn't take no for an answer and anytime anyone would get upset with me, I'd just smile and say, 'I'm sorry.' So, I was really hard to dislike while I was also inevitably disliked. And that's why I say that I was a bit of a monster. 'This is our friendly, goofy monster, but he's learning everything we know.'"

I wondered if he had seen some of that in the young Bill Sienkiewicz, but I didn't want him to get off of the subject of Johnstone & Cushing if I could help it.

"On a percentage basis," I was trying to keep my questions as forensic as possible at this point. "How much do you figure you learned by asking questions, and how much did you learn by just seeing other people's work at the level of proficiency required at Johnstone & Cushing?"

If you give Neal a forensic question you will get a forensic answer. "I'd say 90% by looking and 10% by asking people. I only asked about the things that I didn't understand. But, even at Johnstone & Cushing, it was basically just drawing comics, and drawing comics isn't—and has never been—rocket science. And a lot of the questions were very basic. Looking at a guy's page and asking 'Why do all those people look like *you*?' 'Because I take polaroids of myself for reference when I do the work.' Oh. Okay."

I laughed. "That explains that one."

Neal laughed, too. "That would explain that one real quick. I saw Alex Kotzky's work early on. At the time he was working for Stan Drake on *The Heart of Juliet Jones.* And I was looking at his work. He came to Johnstone & Cushing with a Sunday page and he was finishing it up there and I was *stunned* by the lines. I mean, I just couldn't get *past* the lines. And I asked him what did he use to get those lines? And he held up this box of Gillot-290 pen points. And he said, 'Here, have one. Stan Drake uses these.' Whoa! Stan *Drake!*"

It was really something to hear the retrospective reverence in his voice and the way his eyes lit up re-enacting the eighteen-year-old Neal Adams' reaction. I laughed.

"And when he gave it to me, he said 'You're got to be real gentle with it, like with a brush.' And I'm thinking 'Yeah, right. It's still. . .*steel.*' So I put the pen point in my pen and practically broke it when it touched the paper because a Gillot-290 pen point, the flanges will spread like a brush and whatever ink you have on the nib, it just goes right down the middle and lays a blob on your paper."

It is almost fifty years after the fact, and I have greedily filed away Alex Kotzky's tip for my next expedition to Curry's in Toronto.

[which ultimately was a failure. They had no idea what I was talking about. When I phoned Neal later and asked him how long it had been since he had bought Gillot-290 nibs, he said he was still living off of the last gross he had bought.]

The Gillot-290 pen nib will let you ink like Stan Drake? I have found the Lost Treasure of the Sierra Madres. I have found King Solomon's Mines. Time to dig a little deeper.

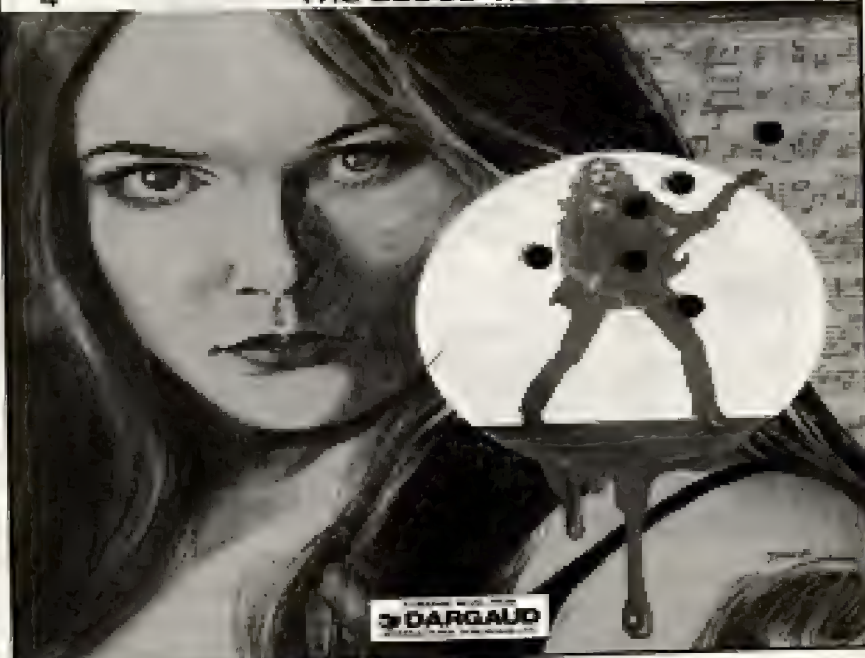
"Well, yes, presumably it's *still* a pen nib."

"And?" he asks himself rhetorically, remembering that first "taste." He laughs. "No it's not." He laughs again. "No, sir. That pen nib is like the tool of the devil. It will drive you crazy. There are two different mental processes that you use with a pen and with a brush. When you use a brush and you're used to the brush, you work by eye—you see where the brush hits the paper and make your line according to your eye. When you use a pen point and you're used to the pen point, the line comes more from the pressure of the pen. You can *feel* the paper through the pen nib and the pen and you make your line and adjust your line according to the physical sensation. You use your eye and your hand in tandem to tell you how thick or how thin your line is going to be in response to what your eye is seeing and your hand is feeling. When you get used to the feel, the feel makes your line for you and your mind doesn't have to focus on what is happening at that exact second on the page and your mind can just draw. When you switch to brush you have to click a different thing on in your head because you don't feel the paper when you touch the brush to it. There's a little bit of 'drag,' but it really doesn't amount to much in terms of telling you anything that you can adjust for. So, you really have to guide it exclusively on the basis of what your eye is seeing. The Gillot-290 is between a pen and a brush. You can't feel the paper except after you have spread the flanges just a little bit. That distance that you spread it [laughs] it will just f--k you up. So, if you don't rely on your eye when you use the 290, then you're 'gone'. To think that Stan Drake drew his strips with a 290," laughing at the elusiveness of the Treasure, the key to the Mines. "Oh. It just staggered me."

Still trying to get my own hand on the key: "On the one hand, it explained how he got that idiosyncratic Stan Drake look…"

"Right! Well, I started drawing with a 290, and it took me a long time to learn it, but when I did, I was in heaven. I was in heaven. There is no pen point like a 290. I hardly use them at all now because I have to rush stuff out. But boy, when I was doing *Ben Casey* that was an artist with his tool.

"So, there's an example of a question I would ask. After looking at Alex Kotzky's work and staring at it and studying it and absorbing it for about an hour, what's the question I come up with?" He laughs in retrospect at the sheer commonplace fanboyishness of it all: 'What pen point do you use?'" And then, like a junkie recalling his first fix: "Oh. Yeah, I'll take one. Thank you.'"

Looking for a metaphorical back way into the Mine, I asked, "When you used the 290, did you use it almost exclusively after that? Or did you save it for specific lines you couldn't get any other way?"

Stan Drake produced some nice work in a series of eighties Kelly Green graphic novels for Dargaud (they were written by Leonard Starr).

Neal addressed the question at the outer boundary of extremes of texture. "Well, the 290 can give you a brush line." I was picturing some of the crystal-sharp strokes Stan Drake had used to define Eve and Juliet Jones' hair styles. "Used properly a 290 can do…" searching mentally for the most forensically accurate term "…anything. The 290 is not really a pen, it's an object of God. It's…magic. It's awful at the same time. It will betray you, it will cross over. Oh, it does terrible things."

Pretty much aware that that was all that was required as the perfect sales pitch to an artist whose work inhabits the far left position on Scott McCloud's "Picture Plane" Neal moved on.

"Another thing that happened to me—along the lines of absorbing by observing—this guy comes in to Johnstone & Cushing. And he's got some little thing that he's doing for, like, "Space Conquerors" [*a comics series in* Boy's Life Magazine *created and packaged for them by Al Stenzel. The illustrators were uncredited*] or something like that, but he had some other work with him as well and he asked, apparently, 'Do you mind if I just take a desk and finish my other work up first before I do this work?' So, I guess they let him. And I wasn't introduced. Or maybe I was introduced and I didn't 'get it'? Because I'm dumb. Among all of the things you could find out about me that would tell you about the real Neal

Lou Fine, "genius"

Adams, never overlook the fact that I'm basically a dumb guy."

I think it would be more accurate to say that no one could be forensically perfect in their assessments 100% of the time. But, if that was your ambition, and clearly it was Neal Adams' "never settle for less" ambition, the odds were that you would certainly end up feeling dumb anytime you didn't hit that plateau. But, I let it go, rather than get bogged down in a forensic argument over semantics.

"So, here's this guy sitting at this desk and he pulls out this artwork, this picture of Benjamin Franklin sitting behind a desk. And he puts his pencil down and this... *stuff*...comes out of his pencil," this was said with a note of uncharacteristic wonderment that exceeded even the revelation about Stan Drake's pen nib. "It...*flows*...out of his pencil. And the stuff is drawings: of a roll-top desk and Ben Franklin sitting at the desk. And I'm looking over at this, and I'm thinking of the struggle that I have to go through to make things look like what they're supposed to look like, the pictures and photographic reference that I have to work up before I even get to the drawing board, and this stuff is flowing out of the tip of this guy's pencil. And I couldn't believe it. I wanted to leap up and stand behind him and look over his shoulder and watch and stare. I couldn't though. I could only look at it out of the corner of my eye. I couldn't believe it. That an artist could just sit down and draw whatever he wanted to draw, that it would just come out of the end of his pencil. It just stunned me."

I was trying to picture it. "Very little erasing?"

"He didn't *have* to erase. If he had an extra line somewhere, he just wouldn't ink it. Perfect three-point perspective and it would just come out of his pencil. Technically perfect trees, technically perfect bushes. All things that he had obviously memorized. The roll-top desk, the captain's chair. I'd go out and get a cup of coffee, and when I came back there would be this perfect captain's chair in perfect proportion and perfect perspective that hadn't been there when I had left.

"'You can't *do* that,' I thought. 'It isn't possible.' It literally made my heart beat faster. Incredible things. So finally I went out and talked to Bob Larose and asked him 'Who is this...this...' I was completely at a loss for a word that would describe someone who was capable of doing what he was doing. And Bob said, 'That's Lou Fine.'"

Neal re-enacted trying to place the name in 1959. "'Lou Fine. Lou *Fine*. He did commercial comics right?'

'Oh, yeah. He did commercial comics. He also worked for Will Eisner.'

"Will Eisner. Will *Eisner*. Who's Will Eisner?" wondered the Neal Adams of 1959, then explaining:

"Because I was in that generation that had missed Will Eisner's *Spirit*. I had missed it. But I remembered the advertising stuff that Lou Fine had done, and I remembered seeing this old comic book that had a character called The Ray and that strip had been signed by Lou Fine. But I couldn't really put all that together with this man that was sitting there at the next desk. This man who had come in

with a limp. He had a gimpy leg. He looked like a sharp-featured…accountant. And he sat quietly at his desk, sipping his coffee and—*magic*—was coming out of his pencil. Nothing that Bob had said to me put it in perspective. Those were just little bits and pieces and here was this guy in the next room turning out these drawings. I couldn't get over it. Just couldn't get over it.

"And he gets a phone call.

"And it's obvious that there's someone on the phone *yelling at him*. And when someone is yelling at you, you cringe. And it was some woman telling him to pick up the groceries. And he took out a piece of paper, and he started to write a list, and there were about seven things, and then she was yelling at him about his son because his son had done something, and he said something like 'Can't you fix it?' And she was berating him for it being his fault, whatever it was, and he finished the grocery list and I'm thinking

"This…*genius*…is making out… a grocery list. For this…*harridan*…on the other end of the phone line.'

"And he's just taking this abuse. Incredible. Incredible to me. And then he hangs up the phone and turns back to his page, and there's Ben Franklin with the coattails going down between the struts on the back of the captain's chair, a close-up in the next panel of his face, with all the wrinkles beautifully delineated. And I just couldn't figure it out. And I asked Bob Larose after Lou Fine left, I said, 'What's going on? No one can treat a genius like this with that kind of abuse.' And Bob said, "That's just the way it is with some folks. Yeah, he's Lou Fine, but his family has no respect for him—for whatever reason—they walk all over him and use him as a doormat. And he goes out and makes a living and gives them money and buys them things—buys them a house, buys his son a car—and…takes it.'

"And the only way that I could reconcile it to myself was that he had been given this gift and whatever abuse he took, that gift could not be taken away from him. That was the only way that I could make it add up."

Obviously, "foolish Dave Sim the evil misogynist" needed to tiptoe around this one a little carefully, and I elected to attempt to bypass it completely.

"Did you get to the point where you talked with him?"

"Oh, sure. Oh, yeah. But I couldn't get through to him too much because he was inherently reticent. I mean, what are you going to say? You know? 'Why are you putting up with this bulls--t?'"

It's certainly a problem I wasn't unfamiliar with, and it seemed particularly sad that that would be Neal's dominant memory of Lou Fine.

"And I didn't know enough about the Will Eisner, The Ray stuff to ask any questions that would have made any sense. Next time I heard from Lou Fine, he asked if I would ghost his newspaper strip, *Peter Scratch*. Some fanzine found the two weeks that I did for him and printed them somewhere along the line. If you have geek friends, they can probably find them."

I laughed. "That's one of the nice things about the Internet, it's all out there someplace."

I felt bad just "moving on" from Lou Fine like that and took another stab at it. "Did you get a chance to, say, tell Lou Fine how impressed you had been with his drawing ability?"

Neal laughed. "Well, it was really hard talking with my jaw hanging on the ground. He had to avoid tripping over it." And then he, too, appeared to feel bad about just "moving on" from Lou Fine but clearly saw no other option.

"Seriously, I think that whatever his life had been at that point was a result of whatever had happened to him. Whatever that was. In those situations you don't want to go into it personally too much. He just seemed to me to be a tragic figure. I mean, don't you think we would have heard more about Lou Fine over the years if he hadn't been such a tragic figure?"

The question put me in a quandary. In the context of our feminist age—and when I'm out in public, I try to stay well within what I see as the lunatic bounds implied by that—I'm not sure that even suggesting that you're a "tragic figure" if you have a harridan for a wife doesn't instantly classify you as a misogynist. I think Lou Fine's wife in our present age would probably just be called "a strong, independent woman."

"I think there's a good case to be made for that," I said, hoping I wasn't falling into a feminist trap, "Because there certainly wasn't anyone within a country mile of Lou Fine's league when he was firing on all cylinders, like when he was working on the Quality Comics material—Mac Raboy was about the closest in a 'pure illustrative ability' sense."

"Well, I'm here to tell you that he got *better* than that. Unquestionably he got even better than that." I tried to picture that as I ran a short Lou Fine slide show through my brain and Neal returned to the unhappy reality of Lou Fine's life and the brief period when their lives had intersected.

"I don't think there was a space to break through. Of course, I told him I was impressed by his work and I was agog by what he was doing, but essentially he was preoccupied with whether he got the list right for the groceries. I think any young artist that would have been around, Lou Fine couldn't have helped but to be aware of their being stunned, clearly he was aware of it but it was too little, too late. To me, he seemed bored with the

Adams: "[Lou Fine] sat quietly at his desk, sipping his coffee and—*magic*—was coming out of his pencil."

Leonard Starr's Mary Perkins On Stage *Sunday page May 26, 1957*

reality of being this brilliant artist and far more aware that he was virtually unknown except for the comic-book field and, of course, to the illustrators at places like Johnstone & Cushing.

"It was a really tough thing to bite down on as an artist," he concluded. 'All you can really say is, boy, I hope it doesn't happen to me like that."

Clearly it was time to move on from Lou Fine but I tried edging rather than running away: "Was he the best artist at Johnstone & Cushing as far as you were concerned?"

Tom Scheuer

"Well, there was Tom Scheuer," Neal replied immediately. He hadn't had to mull the question over, so I assumed Tom Scheuer had to be quite a talent. "He actually decided to become a writer, ultimately. He went to Hollywood and he became the head writer on *Murder, She Wrote*. And essentially he denied his past; wasn't proud of the fact that he had been an artist at one point. He had put that aside and become a writer. I have seen him twice since that time and he looks with great amusement upon the machinations of the comic-book field. But he started out working for Leonard Starr, then did a lot of stuff on his own and tried to do a syndicated strip. His goal had been that he would have a syndicated strip by the time he was thirty. And he passed his thirtieth year and it hadn't happened. And, then of course I got one right after I was twenty."

Never having been the boy wonder, but having been second-best-is-still-a-loser to a few boy wonders my response was, "That's gotta hurt."

"Yeah, that probably hurt him a little bit. And

it was soon after that that he disappeared and went out to Hollywood and became a writer. A very *successful* writer.

"And I was a total fan of his artwork. And I got to meet Leonard Starr through him. Those guys were of another generation. Even though their generation was *close* to mine—at that time when I was twenty he was thirty—there is a great distance there. They sort of drew me into their generation and let me know what was going on. I was sufficiently talented that at least I had earned their respect. But it was a very different time, a different type of thing from what we find now. These were guys who dressed in three-button suits and lived in Connecticut and drove sports cars. The whole *Button-Down Mind of Bob Newhart* time period. And it was a group of them, a whole bunch of them. If they didn't live in Connecticut, they lived *as if* they lived in Connecticut. And they all dressed the same and they were all young suburbanites.

"All Tom really wanted to do was to be able to buy a Jaguar. That was his goal. He cared about the art but not sufficiently to…" He trails off and opts instead to cut to the forensic core of the question: "Why didn't Tom get a syndicated strip? Well, I guess he just didn't care enough. But he did care enough about other things and he was a success in those things. So, I think it's a pretty good trade-off that if he really didn't respect syndicated cartooning that much—not enough to actually do a strip but just wanting the syndicated strip as a mark of success—the best thing that could have happened to him was that he *didn't* sell the strip and that he, instead, went out to Hollywood and became a successful TV writer."

Neal laughed. "I'll tell you a little story. I don't think I'm telling stories out of school. I went down with Tom to meet Leonard Starr who was doing a strip called *Mary Perkins On Stage* and who was one of the better comic strip and comic book illustrators of the time. Tom was trying to convince me that I ought to see a psychiatrist I think because…that's one of those things that you do."

Sometimes stereotypes are archetypes, I thought. "That's one of those Connecticut things."

"One of those things," Neal agreed. "You get the sports car and then you get a psychiatrist and get your head straightened out—while you're drinking and smoking and playing golf. And I told Tom, 'Whoa, I don't quite know *why* I would see a psychiatrist'. And Tom said, 'It makes you understand yourself and, you know, get happy.' And I said, 'Do you go to a psychiatrist?' And he said, 'I found this psychiatrist that, actually, Leonard goes to.' He was a fan of Leonard's so he took Leonard's recommendation to go to a psychiatrist. And I said, 'Sooo…when are you going?' And he said, 'Leonard's there now, but as soon as he's finished his hour, I'm going over.' And I got this immediate picture in my mind of Leonard leaving the couch and Tom leaping immediately onto it, gathering up whatever warmth might have been left in the couch." Neal laughed. "It seemed a little odd to me. So I said, 'I don't know that I'd really want to go and see a psychiatrist because I'm, you know, pretty okay.' He said, 'Well, you want to be *happy* don't you?' And I said, 'Well, you know, Tom.'" He laughed again at the memory of the conversation, "'I'm pretty happy. I'm a pretty happy guy.' And he got upset with me and he sort of turned on me and said, 'Well, I bet I'm happier than *you*.' I reckoned he was probably right about that, but I figured I'd really rather not go and see a psychiatrist, anyway. He made his point and I backed off *real* quick."

I laughed good-naturedly but thought to myself, Was that where it all began? All these notions of political correctness of people's heads needing to be straightened out no matter how happy they were as individuals? Even in the recounting, Neal's self-assessment that "I'm pretty happy. I'm a pretty happy guy" rings hollow as if considering yourself to be happy might be an early warning sign of psychological imbalance. "He made his point and I backed off real quick." Why should the guy who considers himself to be naturally happy be the one to "back off" in that context? And yet clearly he needed to do so. A societal loophole that size would seem big enough to drive a truck—or feminism—through.

"I'm really going to have to apologize to the readers of *Following Cerebus* that I'm lingering so long on the subject of Johnstone & Cushing…"

"You can apologize for me, too, while you're at it," Neal laughed. "Sorry, readers."

"…but what interests me about it is that it really was the peak working environment for the comic-strip realism illustration 'school'."

"Well, yes," Neal conceded, "The guys who worked there were the 'top dogs'. Craig Flessel worked there, Stan Drake, Tom Scheuer, Leonard Starr, Elmer Wexler, George Evans, Alden McWilliams—almost everyone who was considered a top illustrator in comic strips and comic books went through there at one point doing a commercial job. And they were very picky about the people that they used."

"I mean, if they were paying $200 a page…"

"…at a time when everyone else was paying $50 a page, yeah."

"…they would got their pick of whomever they wanted."

What I didn't realize until later was that part of my fascination was that this high-water mark in realistic comic art illustration had been attained to and then had virtually disappeared as has the realistic narrative strip itself. The only comic strip ads in the papers and magazines these days make *Garfield* look like Gustav Doré. It was only when Neal himself had revived and entrenched the style through Continuity Associates that it once more gained a small toehold in the marketplace.

And the Camelot of realistic comic art illus-

"I kicked ass a lot of those days." Ben Casey *daily strips for May 5 and 6, 1966 done in ink and Craftint duoshade board.*

tration had expired roughly around the same time as its White House counterpart: 1963-64.

"A few interesting things happened at Johnstone & Cushing," Neal said, his undertone indicating that he was coming to the end of them and was now scraping the bottom of the barrel as a way of humouring me. "I came in one day, and it was my birthday. And the guys were there, all of the freelancers were there, and there was a cake. And I came in, and they sang happy birthday. And I thought, 'Wow, this is really cool. All these guys are singing 'Happy Birthday' to me' and I was *totally* embarrassed. And I had a piece of cake, and every-one was having a good time drinking coffee and soda—a couple of the guys were drinking booze. And I said to one of the guys, 'Why are you guys...'" laughing at the memory of it, "...I mean, this is really *nice* and everything...but why are you guys making such a *fuss* over my birthday?' And this guy put his arm around my shoulder, and he says, 'Well, it's like this, Neal. *Finally* we don't have to go home and tell our wives that we're getting beat out by a *teenager*.'"

I laughed so uproariously, it was a while before I was able to say anything, and what I finally said was, "It had been a tough year."

Neal laughed, too. "It had been a tough year for these guys.

"But, it was a great time for me and it..." moving right along, Dave "...led right into the syndicated strip. If you think about it, that's a hell of ride. It didn't seem like that to me at the time. But it was. It was one thing on top of another. I worked for Johnstone & Cushing for two years—turning out whole campaigns and comic books for advertising—and I landed a syndicated strip and did that for three years."

Checking to see if the legend was true: "And if you'd gotten the strip three months earlier, your mother would have had to sign the contract."

Ben Casey

Adams: Yeah, that's true. They were selling the strip and they had pretty much decided on me but by the time they got me the contract I had turned twenty-one so, whew, I could sign the thing. But, if I'd have gotten it at twenty, I would have had to bring my Mom in [laughs].

Sim: *What about the workload on* Ben Casey? *Was it staggering after Johnstone & Cushing?*

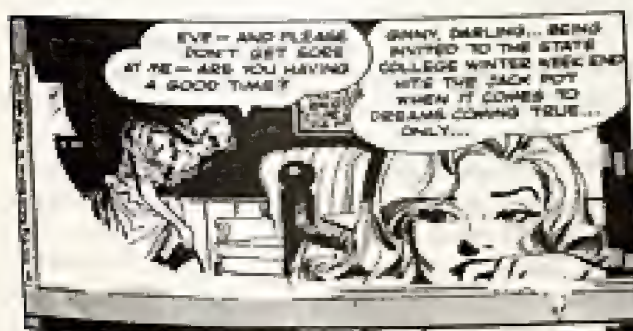
Adams: Not really. In fact I did Johnstone & Cushing work *while* I did *Ben Casey.* But, I was kind of a workhorse. I mean I worked fifteen hours a day, seven days a week. So, for me I looked forward to things like getting ahead on my deadlines so I could experiment with new techniques. Use Craftint [*artboard preprinted with two tones which could be 'developed' by brushing on two different developing fluids. I used it—very badly I must say—on* Cerebus *No. 12*], or overload a specific sequence or story with zip-a-tone or do a sequence in pencil. I was working extra time to gain extra time so I could spend even more time doing the strip [laughs]. And at the same time I did the commercial stuff whenever I could. It didn't seem to Johnstone & Cushing or even to the guy Al Stenzel later on that I was slacking off on the other stuff. What happens with syndicated strips is that you get your strip and it becomes like your retirement plan? You know, you work really hard on your career, doing lots of comic book stuff—this is the

A sequence from Form & Void *done in a daily strip style*

way it was, not any longer—and you would turn out comic book stuff until you land a comic strip and that becomes the retirement plan. You get a house up in Connecticut, periodically you would hire ghosts to do the strip for two or three or four or five weeks at a time so you can go to the Caribbean. There was a lot of that back in 'them that days'. It wasn't *my* time or *my* days. First of all I wasn't making much from the strip—I could make better money elsewhere. It was basically the same thing Howard Nostrand had run into with *Bat Masterson*, you would get a fair number of papers because of the TV tie-in but the production company—Bing Crosby Productions on *Ben Casey*—took a very big piece of the pie.

But *creatively* I was basically like a beast, like a beaver, like a machine that just kept chopping up the turf. I just couldn't work long enough or hard enough to learn all of the things that I wanted to learn and to try all of the things that I wanted to try. For example, in New York…this is confession time…in New York we had four newspapers. *The Daily News, The Mirror, The World-Telegram & Sun* and *The Journal-American*. So, we essentially got all the good syndicated strips. We got John Cullen Murphy's *Big Ben Bolt*, we got Stan Drake's *Heart of Juliet Jones*, Leonard Starr's *On Stage*, *Flash Gordon* by Dan Barry, *Apartment 3-G* by Alex Kotzky and *Dr. Kildare* by Ken Bald. Every morning I would go out to the corner store, and I would buy all four papers. And I would spread all four papers out, and I would check *my* daily *that day* against everybody else's to see who won. And the first half a year, I didn't do that good. After that, [chuckles] I did pretty good. I kicked ass a *lot* of those days. And that was a lot of guys to beat. And I did that *every day*. I'm sure those other guys didn't do that. They couldn't give a crap.

They Couldn't Give a Crap

This got into an awkward area for me. Arguably, all that Neal had had to say about the Best and the Brightest of syndicated photorealistic comic strips had amounted to "break it to him gently." Or, in the case of the last sentence in the previous section, "not-so-gently if it comes to that." There was an idealistic, reverent part of me who wanted to see these guys as more than they were and another part of me that was fully aware of their limitations and their professional focus. While I was writing this section, I had gotten in from

"He could do girls and put expressions on their faces and they would still be pretty." Heart of Juliet Jones *daily strips by Stan Drake February 15 and May 3, 1954.*

Alex Raymond's Flash Gordon: *"flightily romantic in the beginning." Sunday page September 1, 1935.*

Manuel Ruiz Galan volumes 9 and 11 of Rip Kirby *in Spanish, reprinting several sequences by John Prentice in the 1960s at the height of his abilities. What I often see (and often won't allow myself to see otherwise) as a spontaneous line was really just a rushed line that Prentice and the others had developed in order to get out to the golf course or out for a spin in their sports cars a little earlier in the day. The net effect of the work is still astonishing to me and I burn with the temptation of the damned to draw like that. And a big part of the appeal is that these guys worked under the nutcracker deadline pressure of six daily strips and a Sunday every week which after 26 years on* Cerebus *I could relate to a lot more than the wind-sprint mini-series approach that dominates the modern comic-book field. "First you get good, then you get fast, then you get good* and *fast." You won't see my motto posted over too many 21st Century comic book artists' drawing boards. Al Williamson hit his peak by doing more than a decade-long stint on* Secret Agent X-9, *John Prentice did* Rip Kirby *for decades.*

But, as Neal said, for most of them a syndicated strip was as much a retirement plan as anything else. If you could keep your subscribing newspaper base in the hundreds (or, at least, over a hundred) there was sufficient revenue to pay a Neal Adams or an Al Williamson or George Evans or Craig Flessel —basically anyone who was good enough to be hired by Johnstone & Cushing but who didn't have a syndicated strip of their own at the time—to imitate what had become the syndicated photorealistic strip "look," for a period of three or four weeks while you basically screwed off and did nothing. The photorealism virus was in my bloodstream and had been since I had decided to do the short Cuba sequence in Form & Void [the bottom two panels of page 553 and the top two panels of page 554] *in the daily strip style. I am dazzled and amazed by Prentice's work in both the volumes I got in while I was working on this piece. But I was also keenly aware that I could very likely be looking at a week's worth of strips done by Al Williamson or George Evans and merely signed by John Prentice.*

Sim: *What was your reaction to Stan Drake? It seems to me that he was the earliest guy to take the Alex Raymond illustration style from* Rip Kirby *and really tighten it up.*

Adams: [dismissive] But he turned it into a soap opera style: that romantic, swashbuckling type of stuff. It was more "real life," giggly girls and…

Sim: *Love comics.*

Adams: Love comics. I appreciated him for the fact that one, he took photographs for his stuff. Two, he used that Gillot-290, three, the stuff was very realistic, and four, he could do girls and put expressions on their faces and they would still be pretty. A female character could compress her lips and arch her eyebrows and still look cute. That was the magic that he brought to it…and he did a strip that was basically about two girls so clearly he was focused on the girls.

I had learned from Tom Sheuer to take photographs so I was very, very big on taking photographs to do my stuff. If you look at my work through the teenaged years into the years on *Ben Casey* you'll see Joe Kubert's style, Russ Heath's style, Mort Drucker's style. Then you see Elmer Wexler,

then you see a shift to Tom Sheuer, then you see the shift to Stan Drake. And then you see other influences being dragged in on the side. So, as an evolutionary process, I went through each of these guys to reach the point of just doing whatever it was that I was doing, which I considered to be straight drawing — boring to some extent, but essentially straight drawing. So, I learned from people who were good drawers. And as I moved into the money-making end and I started to use photographs more, my idols—if you can call them that—became those more realistic artists. If someone had confronted me at the time with "Why are you copying other people's stuff?" I would've said, "What?" [laughs] "Isn't this the way I'm supposed to do it?" Apparently, I still maintained an individuality so that even if you're looking at my old stuff, you'll say "Yeah, that's Neal." But, I'll say, "Naw, can't you see the Stan Drake there? Can't you see the Tom Sheuer there?"

Sim: *When I'm using the photographs, I find myself ranging across a spectrum that starts at Alex Raymond, goes through Al Williamson and John Prentice to Neal Adams and Stan Drake and then back again.*

Adams: That's an interesting side to come at it from because the first three guys you mentioned are basically that romantic Flash Gordon style. And then you get back to the more realistic aspect on our end.

Sim: *A lot of it comes down to how you "see." Because with photorealism—drawings made from photographs, the pencilling is all roughly the same. It's just a traced photograph. But if I'm looking at Al Williamson's* Secret Agent X-9 *strips or Stan Drake's* The Heart of Juliet Jones *strips, I literally start seeing the world with their ink finish on it. The world looks like an Al Williamson strip or a Stan Drake strip. And the same with your work. If I study your work for an hour or so, I come away from the drawing board seeing everything with a Neal Adams ink finish on it.*

Adams: Well, yes, and remember that Alex Raymond went through that same evolutionary process himself. Between *Flash Gordon* and *Rip Kirby* he went from an approach was "flighty" romantic in the beginning, elegantly romantic in the middle, and then he evolved this urbane suburban detective and then he turned it over to John Prentice. But, essentially, he went from something otherworldly to a much more urbane and sophisticated style. The pipe in the mouth, the not-quite porkpie hat, the tailored suit. And he was the leader who led everyone down that fabled path.

Sim: *It seemed to me that what Alex Raymond innovated was the concept of importing the look of modern magazine and advertising illustration, whereas most of the other realism guys in comic strips and comic books were still, in the late 1940s and 1950s, drawing comics that were based in a pre-war* 1930s*-style magazine illustration sensibility. They were still imitating the style of Raymond's* X-9 *and* Flash Gordon.

Adams: To which all of us who really like comics say, that's boring [laughs]. Yeah. "You're just a little too sophisticated for me now, Alex. Whatever happened to *Flash Gordon?*"

Sim: *I don't know. I did my appreciation for Raymond's* Rip Kirby *in the* Comics Journal *and a few weeks later Art Spiegelman did an appreciation for Raymond's* Flash Gordon *in the* New Yorker *or someplace. I begin to suspect I might be the only person in the comics field that holds* Rip Kirby *in much higher regard than* Flash Gordon. *The one time I talked with Al Williamson on the phone—Al Williamson who is probably the closest to Raymond's* Rip Kirby *style template—and I asked him what he had thought when he first saw* Rip Kirby *back in 1946. And he said, "I was disappointed. I wanted Raymond to do* Flash Gordon *again." Personally, I don't get it.*

Adams: "I was very, very big on taking photographs to do my stuff."

Adams: I don't think it's any different for any of us. It's sort of like the Beatles. If you become good at what you do as they did, and you become smarter about what you're doing...? Sometimes smart isn't so good. You can lose that "rock 'n' roll" quality. And I think that's what happens. It's like when I do comics. There are people who think I should

GIVE AND TAKE

Stunning Russ Heath art from Blazing Combat 4 *(1966)*

have died after I did "Deadman." [Sim laughs]. "Why did you continue to do comics after that?" [laughs] "'Deadman' was it!" And you go, "Whoa, wait a minute. What about *Batman*?" "No. 'Deadman.' That was it." There are old men who think I should have stopped after *Ben Casey*. There are people who think I should have died after I did *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* or the *X-Men*. You know? That's it for me.

Geophysics 101 Back to Class

Neal's geophysics theories had been tumbling around in the back of my brain as we were discussing all this, and I knew he was more interested in that subject than Johnstone & Cushing…or his direct antecedents and contemporaries in syndicated cartooning…so I moved the conversation back to where we had left off. What does he say to the people who doubt his theories, first of all about the growing earth and then about the configuration of the earth when all the land masses had been in one place?

"Well," says the scientist, [sober scientific voice], "Where is your proof, Mr. Adams?" I say, the only dinosaurs that are left on earth right now…are birds. And birds are the only creatures on earth that migrate hemispherically. Some don't. Penguins don't. But, as a general rule, birds migrate seasonally and hemispherically from North to South, *across the equator.*

The point is, that at a certain time in the past, when the planet was much smaller than it is today, gravity was less than it is today. In the distant past it was one quarter of what it is today, in the nearer past it was one half of what is today and so on. As the planet grew, gravity increased. And, in fact, all scientific evidence indicates that this is the case. If you were to look at the *National Geographic Survey* that shows how the ocean bottoms grew and spread—and you were to leave aside the subduction theory and just look at the maps—it would show that the present-day oceans of the earth that cover *two-thirds* to *three quarters* of the planet didn't exist before 200 million years ago. In fact *half* of them didn't exist at the time that the dinosaurs died, 63 million years ago—*half!* Which means that the oceans bottoms are spreading *exponentially:* more rapidly as time goes by. Not because that's what I say (laughs) it has nothing to do with me, but because that's what science says. They say, [serious scientific voice] "Well, we can explain how that's possible". And that's where the subduction theory comes in—that the oceanic plates slid under the continents and back into the magma. [serious scientific voice] "Except we say that there's not so much magma anymore. In fact, we say that only 4% of the Asthenosphere is magma." So how can the ocean bottoms slip under it? [serious scientific voice] "Well, it does it very…slowly." [laughs]

Whatever the *actual* explanation is, the subduction theory doesn't take into account all of the other evidence. It doesn't take into account the fact that the largest land mammal on earth today is only one quarter the size of the largest dinosaur. It doesn't take into account the fact that all of the continental edges, like huge jigsaw puzzle pieces, match all of the other continental edges all around the world. It doesn't take into account the fact that there is not a square yard of ocean bottom anywhere on the planet that is any older than 180 million years. Again, if the subduction theory is true there must be some part of some ocean bottom that is 200 million years old or 400 million years old. Doesn't exist. Deep ocean rifting began 180 million years ago everywhere on the planet. I believe in the truth. I have very, very strong feelings about the truth. Very few other things matter to me as much as that.

If you know that the earth grew—you look at the maps or look at the globe and see exactly where the growth has taken place—and you can realize that that's the case then the next logical thing that you're going to say is "Doesn't that mean that all the planets grew? Doesn't it mean that the sun grew? Doesn't it mean that all solar systems grew? Doesn't it mean that all galaxies grew? And doesn't it mean that the universe is growing?" And if that's the case doesn't that growth look exactly the same as if the universe was exploding? After all, if you were on a molecule on the shoulder of a one-year-old child looking through a telescope at the other shoulder of that one-year-old child and then you looked again a year later, you might assume that the child was exploding when all that it's doing is growing.

Alex Raymond's Rip Kirby: *"He went from something otherworldly to a much more urbane and sophisticated style." Daily strip May 22, 1956.*

Sim: *"If I'm looking at Al Williamson's* Secret Agent X-9 *strips,...I literally start seeing the world with [his] ink finish on it. The world looks like an Al Williamson strip."*

Digression Two:
I know you're out there—I can hear you breathing

Adams: I'm thrown a little bit by the fact that you aren't asking me questions [laughs].

Sim: *Actually, because of my own experience with my various theories that I have which usually run contrary to conventional wisdom, I find that it's always better to let someone with a unique theory just explain themselves at whatever length they think they need to in order to do a thorough job of explaining what it is that they're explaining. That was the experience that I had in the car and that's the experience that I've had now that we're recreating the original conversation here on the phone and the experience I've had doing minor narrative fixes on the transcripts. Transcribing our first one-hour session, I noticed that at a specific point, I started thinking "Oh, well, he's just rambling now," when all that had happened was that I had lost the thread of what you were saying. Four or five paragraphs later when I picked up the thread again, I "got it" and then when I doubled back to the point where I had thought "Oh, well, he's just rambling now" there were several obvious transcription errors that jumped out at me immediately because, again, you weren't rambling. I had just lost the thread of what you*

were saying. You were making perfect sense, but my transcript was just rambling.

You also know the material a lot better than I do and you've heard all of the obvious objections a hundred times so you can supply much better questions than I could ever hope to.

It seems to me that the crux of the argument that we reached at the end of our first interview session ties in with what you've just said. There is an easily overlooked analogous appearance between "an explosion" and "growth"—I remember having an epiphany as a teenager, looking at a tree and suddenly seeing it as an explosion in extremely slow motion—just as there is an equally easily overlooked analogous appearance to ostensible "creation" and "assembly". And remembering the original conversation in the car, one of the key foundational elements that helps illustrate your universal theory is the crystal. I mean, we've all seen stop-motion photography which shows crystals essentially assembling themselves, films of the replication and construction of crystalline structures that resembles both "growth" and "explosion" depending on how accelerated the stop-motion photography is.

Again, the Discussion Resumes

Adams: You know sometimes I wonder if it is a common occurrence for people to see those sorts of films but, yeah, you're right. A crystal seems to be growing, but of course it's an inanimate thing which represents a kind of evolutionary process. All crystal grows, in effect, and almost everything out there is crystalline. For example, iron is a crystal, all rocks are crystalline in nature. Minerals that you get in the bottom of a pot of water if you boil all the water away—that white stuff—is crystalline in nature and they bind together very securely. They're very difficult to get off of there as anyone who has tried to clean that white stuff off can attest.

That's how things *assemble* (not how they're *created*). Once they're created then they begin to assemble. So, for example, if you have a universe that doesn't contain anything and you want to make stuff you have to first make atoms. If you're able to make atoms of stuff and float them in space those atoms will find other atoms like them that will join together and become crystals and you'll end up having meteorites. At a loss for logic, conventional wisdom holds that meteorites come from exploded planets but that's a little ridiculous because planets don't...*generally*...explode. Logic dictates that something threw atoms into space and those atoms find a place that is suited to that sort of atom.

The sun, our sun, shoots out a hundred million tons of ions and electrons per second into the solar system. Now since our particular solar system is five billion years old, if you do the math of how much material is being shot out of the sun and for how long it has been shooting out of the sun, you'd actually have enough material to build one or two earths. It's what we call the solar wind. And when there's a lot of it being blown out we call it the solar storm. Now that stuff that is being blown out is called a plasma. It's not going to *stay* a plasma. A plasma is ions and nuclei of atoms. What the sun has is hydrogen and helium. They're two of our simplest elements. A hydrogen atom has one electron, one proton, no neutron. A helium atom has two electrons, two protons and two neutrons. Where do we get the two neutrons? Magic.

So what happens is the sun, energized, starts blasting out this material into its system, into its—let's call it—electromagnetic field. It blasts these things out and what it does is it ionizes them. That is, the electrons that are on the *outside* of these ions it blasts them right off. So all you have going out are the nuclei—which are the two protons and two neutrons because the two electrons have been blasted free. Now if you're a sensible person, what you're going to think...[laughs] *maybe*...is that they're going to fly out into the solar system and that electrons are going to find the protons and neutrons and wrap themselves around the protons and neutrons and turn them back into atoms again. Sure enough that is what they're going to do. But before they do, ions may link up with other ions and make heavier atoms. On the sun all you have is hydrogen and helium but if you blast that helium and hydrogen *out*, what happens is ions—that center portion, before they run into other electrons—link together with other ions and make larger atoms like iron and manganese. Then along comes the electron and wraps around them and keeps them from growing. The sun has blasted out its stuff and in the electromagnetic

Classic splash page from The Avengers *95 (1972)*

Adams doesn't save his inventive layouts just for his superhero stories, as this explosive sequence from Our Army at War *240 (1972) shows.*

field of the sun those things have turned into higher-count atoms. It's made its matter—the stuff that will assemble into planets and moons and meteorites. What happens is that those atoms—just as all atoms do—will join together, link up and become meteorites. You've heard how crystals grow easily and more perfectly in space? The electromagnetic field around the sun functions in the same way as the lines of force around a magnet. Lines of force around the sun attract matter into specific patterns in the same way that the lines of force around a magnet will attract iron filings sprinkled onto a piece of paper overtop of that magnet into specific patterns. Atoms link up with both identical and compatible atoms in specific "comfort zones" for those atoms in the astronomically huge lines of force that surround the sun. So, as these meteorites are growing in space many of them carry with them iron because iron is one of the easiest atoms to make because it's a cube atom. So what happens is that these meteorites will be attracted to the electromagnetic lines and one day, a meteorite which is sufficiently big will hook up onto that line and travel along that line around the sun. These meteorites will be drawn together or crash into each other and make bigger meteorites and they will "grow" in an ideal electromagnetic line; as did each of the planets from Mercury out to Neptune when they formed.

Now, this is what *Neal* is saying—this isn't *necessarily* what *science* is saying although science *does* say that there does seem to be an incredible coincidence of the regularity of the orbits of the planets going out from the sun. It's actually called Bodé's Law (no, not *Vaughn* Bodé), a calculation that demonstrates not only how the planets go out from the sun *distance-wise* but also in a mathematical progression—as an example, Uranus is said to be "out of place." What it says is that there must be something there that these things are travelling around on that gives them these mathematically perfect orbits spaced at mathematically predictable intervals around the sun. The logic, to me, is that our planets are travelling around on these electromagnetic lines around the sun. What that line does is that it encourages those planets or those pieces that are on them to spin. To understand what spin is you kind of have to study another branch of science—electromagnetic energy—and what you'll find is that "spin" creates electromagnetic energy and electromagnetic energy creates "spin"... [laughs] they will tell you. If you "spin" a planet on a line then what will happen is that you will create energy at its core and, if Neal is right, matter is being *created* inside the cores of the planets. Why aren't all the meteorites that are flying around the same size as the earth? Well, they're not electromagnetically activated by "spin" and therefore they're not creating their own matter in their core. If this theory is true then the logic is that this is an on-going process. It means that the earth is growing, that Jupiter is growing, Saturn is growing—we certainly know the sun is growing, although the explanations for why it's growing are wonderfully weird and various and unusual and bizarre.

Sim: *We do know that one day it will become a red giant.*

Adams: Yeah. We *know* these things and when we hear the explanations it doesn't make sense to us and by the time we hear the end of the explanation

our head is so screwed up we don't even understand what the hell we just heard. And if we were sitting in a coffee shop with a friend and we were trying to explain why the sun is growing we wouldn't be able to do it. But the logic of it is—that if you forget all of that gobbledegook—maybe it's growing because matter is being made inside of it. It does seem odd that it's throwing out a hundred million tons of stuff every second and yet it's growing. I mean, think about that. A hundred million tons of stuff every *second* and yet it's not getting smaller, it's getting bigger. It's really not hard to understand when you realize that our universe started as hydrogen—it actually probably started simpler than that—and hydrogen makes suns. And the only atom that the sun can make is helium and it makes it with fusion. So you start with hydrogen and with hydrogen you get suns. The suns will create helium, hydrogen and helium will blast out from the sun into its electromagnetic field, stripping the electrons off of the ions, the ions can then gather into higher count atoms and other electrons will merge with those atoms and those atoms will gather together as meteorites and the meteorites will join together and get bigger: first, from accretion, the joining together of all of those particles and then by spinning and creating material in its core comparable to the creation of matter that's going on inside the sun.

The clear problem with the growing earth theory when they came up with it forty years ago was that they couldn't prove that the earth grew. The scientific community insisted, therefore, that the theory was wrong. And the problem was that the people advancing the theory were geologists and if you are a geologist, you're not a physicist. You're not a cosmologist. You're not an electro-magnetic energy specialist. So the question is: can you study enough physics and cosmology and electromagnetic energy in order to explain how the sun can grow? Is it possible? Well, then you have another question. You either have to say that the universe was created or you have to say that it always existed, always, same fixed amount, world without end, amen. The only problem with that is that we say that our universe is 15 billion years old which sort of limits the discussion.

Carl David Anderson observed matter being created out of nothing. Well, how do you make matter out of nothing? There must be something there. Well, the logic is that there is something there. What's there? This takes us to the "prime matter" we discussed earlier. There's something there that you can make matter out of. What is it? Nothing? Well, the term "nothing" is all relative, isn't it? You would say that there's "nothing" in a vacuum. Well, if there's nothing there, can I make it twice as big as it is? This vacuum has to be something or else you wouldn't be able to describe it. So the question is: what's in a vacuum? Is there a kind of nothing in a vacuum that you can turn into something? Sound stupid? How can you turn nothing into something? Well, what if you put a lot of outward pressure on it? Let's say that you "spin" the universe or you spin a portion of the universe you put this outward pressure on it and you suck it apart and you make these little tiny bubbles. [doubtful voice] Little tiny bubbles? [confident voice] Yeah, little tiny bubbles of *less* than nothing. [doubtful voice] Well, what are you going to do with those? [confident voice] The first thing I'm going to do with them is show them to Carl David Anderson and have him fly an ion through them and see if he can break them into two. One negative and one positive. Because if you have a plus one and a minus one you still have nothing except now you're describing it as being the sum of a plus one entity and a minus one entity. Egyptian mathematics at first thought: there is no such thing as zero. Well, plus one and minus one make zero. Now it seems to me—being a sensible sort—that this is self-evidently true since we use these (in my view, mis-named) "anti-matter particles" in diagnosing illnesses in PET (Positron Emissions Tomography) Scans. These things really exist. I sometimes feel when I talk about this stuff that I'm in the coffee shop talking with other comic-book artists about imaginary comic-book things. But in reality these positive and negative particles exist and they come into existence out of nothing. And that's not possible and yet it happens every day. In fact it's happening right now before your eyes and everywhere in the universe. These particles are being created and the positive particle is annihilating with another electron and they're disappearing all the time everywhere in the universe. Well if that's happening—and it is happening—then aren't we creating matter? And if there's some way that we can take that positive particle and turn it into a proton then we can build a hydrogen sun. I don't like to shake people up too much, but it's really just that simple. If you can take a positron and turn it into a proton, you can take it and the electron and make a hydrogen atom and if you get enough of them together you get a hydrogen sun.

Sim: *As long as you have the kick-off point everything falls in sequence from there.*

Adams: That's right. Now, I don't know why we go "off the rails" on this or why it's such a hard thing to understand because every step along the way makes every possible and verifiable sense. But I have to tell you that a lot of the time when I examine science and scientists I feel as if I'm back at DC Comics in the sixties and they're telling me what you can't do and why you can't do it and all the rest of it.

Now you can say that that appears to be a bad analogy on the surface of it. You can say that, just because comic books were printed far worse than they needed to be in the sixties that doesn't mean that science and scientists for the last 150 years have been operating in the same sort of dysfunctional system with people in authority mandating that everyone has to follow the same bad underlying as-

This famous sequence from Adams in the mid-sixties helped to inspire Sim's first "Mind Game" story in Cerebus 20 *(see* Following Cerebus 8 *for more information).*

sumptions that haven't been valid for decades but basically [laughs] it's true.

Let me give you another example.

I go to a gym every other day. It's a terrific gym—it's called the Chelsea Piers—but the floor of the gym is *filthy*. It's a great gym, a fantastic gym. Why is the floor of the gym filthy? Because the guys who mop it, mop it with dirty water. So, I go to the manager of the gym and I say to him "You know [laughs] the floor of the gym ought to be cleaner than this. I'd be glad to come in with a mop and mop it." He would say to me—*sit back and explain to me*—why it *has* to be the way it is.

Sim [laughs]

Adams: He's talked to the cleaning men and they said that they tried to get the dirt up, but when the floor was first delivered and installed, the guys who installed it and cleaned it accidentally cleaned the patina that was laid down on the floor and they had used some sort of harsh chemical which had destroyed this patina and from then on, the floor was just picking up the dirt.

Sim: *[laughs] Nothing can be done about it.*

Adams: Nothing can be done about it. And I said to him, "Noo. [laughs] The material on the floor is *good*. It's rubber and plastic together and tile and if you want to restore it to what it was originally, all you have to do is clean it and then you put down a coat of wax to keep the dirt off. You have to put a little Spic 'n' Span in a bucket of clean water—but see [laughs] the water has to be *clean*..." And he's going, "No, no, no, Neal. The guys who told me this, they've been over it and over it." Finally I said, "Look, I'll be glad to do it." He says, "No, no, no." So now he was *angry* at me. Typical 1960s DC Comics reaction, I've gotten him pissed off at me. [sighs] It's a couple of days later, I'm in the gym working out, he comes by he says "Hi, Neal," and I said, "If you want me to come in and clean the floor..." and he says "You know, I *like* these discussions that we have together." [laughs] He's resolved himself to the discussions at this point. He says, "It's too bad that there isn't some way that we can work this out." And I said "I'll be glad to do it. I can show you how dirty it is and why—it'll take me one minute." He says, "Yeah?" He says, "I don't think it's going to happen." I said, "Well, pick your minute." And he said "Ahh, next week." A week later he says, "Okay let's do it." So I take him upstairs into the gym and I ask him "Where do you want to do it?" He says, "I don't want to be in the way of the customers" so we find a place on the floor—away from the customers. He says, "Is this place okay?" And I said "Anyplace in the gym is fine..."

Sim: *[laughs] It's* all *dirty.*

Adams: I said, "The guys have kept the dirt in the water. They don't know what they're doing." And he says, "How do *you* know?" I said, "I'm an older, experienced person and I've been through a lot of life experiences, I've [laughed] mopped a lot of floors."

Sim: *You need clean water to do it.*

Adams: So he says, "Okay, what do we do?" I said, "You don't have to do anything." So I got down on my hands and knees, I hawked up a loogie and spit on the floor [laughs] then I took a towel and

put it over my fingers and rubbed the area we were talking about. It went eight shades lighter [laughs] almost instantly and I cleaned the dirt right off. If his jaw was unhinged it would have fallen off. He couldn't believe it. Could *not* believe it. People had been telling him this story for *years.* "You can't get the floor clean. This is the way it is." And so they used dirty water. All they were doing was moving the dirt around. This happened at the beginning of the year and now they're bringing a machine in to clean the floors and then waxing them and the contrast between the floors they've cleaned and waxed and the floors they haven't cleaned and waxed, well, there's no comparison. So now? He's my friend—tells everyone "You better listen to Neal because Neal's always right."—but it took me a *lot* to get him to *be* my friend because people are basically resistant to the sort of things that I say. Scientists are no different. They. Don't. Want. To. Hear. It. Whatever it is.

Sim: *It's a good analogy because if you've made the basic mistake that far back, the problem is just going to keep compounding itself.*

Adams: With science it's been a hundred and fifty years. There are very good people on this Expanding Earth site—which I totally disagree with—a balloon *expands*, earth *grows.* But I joined the group

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Adams could make even the silliest character (Iron Jaw in this case) look very cool.

anyway.

Sim: *They're closer to your viewpoint than anyone else so this is a good place to start.*

Adams: They're *clearly* closer. And, you know, one of the reasons they're so friendly to me is because I did some videos and I posted the videos on my site and they're going "*See? See? See! This is what we've been talking about. Neal did it exactly.*" But, then they have to talk to me and I explain things to them and they don't want to hear *those* things. They'll say "The reason that there are meteors in space is because planets blow up." And I'll say, "Planets blow up? Do you *know* of any planets that blew up?" And they'll say, "Well, what about the asteroid belt?" And I'll say, "Well, no. It's the gravitational force of Jupiter that doesn't *allow* the asteroid belt to *turn into* a planet. It's basically all meteors that can't 'get it together' enough to *become* a planet."

I keep coming back to the fact that you need to have a unified theory which includes all of the evidence, where the evidence shapes the theory rather than to keep fitting new evidence into the theory you had before you had the new evidence. This is when you get into a situation where even good people say silly things. And even I—as I freely admit, at the outer boundary of the theory I'm developing—will, inevitably say incredibly stupid things. As new evidence comes in, things that I have said or will say will get discredited, I take it as a given. But right now, all of the evidence we have discovered over the last a hundred and fifty years is *still* being fitted into these theories which developed in a complete information vacuum 150 years ago and which have nothing to do with the verifiable scientific facts that we have today. [laughs] I stagger through my day in a haze of benign wonder that I'm going to have to write an e-mail to an actual scientist explaining why it is that planets don't blow up. And these are the *good guys.*

Sim: [laughs] *These are the ones who are the closest you can find to your position.*

Adams. [laughs] Right. And they're trying to tell me that planets blow up.

Sim: *As you say, if you can just start right at the beginning of the known, verifiable, irrefutable scientific facts and then* stay *on track…*

Adams: [sigh of relief] Yes. Well, that and *believe the science.* That's what I try to tell people. You don't have to believe *me,* but *believe the science.* Stick with what we know to be the facts and follow the natural progression from there.

Another example of how widespread this is…do you know my 3D story?

Sim: *Mm. Doesn't sound familiar.*

Adams: The 3D album cover that I did for Grand Funk Railroad? They were doing an album called "Shining On" and they wanted the cover to be in 3D and my agent asked me if I knew how to do 3D. [warily] "Yeeaahh. I mean I've never *done* 3D but I know *how* it's done." So he goes and represents me to this record company as an expert on

3D. And so I was invited to a meeting, and they sat me down and said "So you're an expert in 3D," and I said, "Well, I have these comic books that are, like, twenty years old." And I showed them the comic books, and they said, "Do you have anything more recent than these?" And I said, "No, there's really not much being done in 3D"—this was in the late sixties. And they said, "Well, what have *you* done in 3D," and I said "I haven't done anything." And they turned to my agent and said "You said he was an expert in 3D," and my agent turned to me and said, "You told me that you're an expert in 3D," and I said, "No—what I told you was that I know *how to do* 3D and therefore you could *say* that I'm an expert, but I've never done it." Now the reason that I knew how it was done is that I used to sit with Jack Adler up at DC Comics and had him explain the stuff to me *ad nauseam*. I mean the poor guy just had to explain every nuance and rationale and how he did this, this way and why he did that, that way and draw little diagrams. So I learned how to do it.

Conan and Red Sonja (cover art for Cartoonists and Illustrators Portfolio *3 from 1978)*

Sim: *Jack Adler had been in the production department at DC for years.*

Adams: Yeah, he actually did the Superman and Batman 3D one-shots DC had done back in 1953. Anyway, these guys looked at me as if I had just s–t on their table. And I said, "Look [laughs] I know that you're upset." I didn't want the job to begin with. "But, yes, I *am* a 3D expert. And I can do 3D, but I have never *done* 3D. I know how it works. But, I tell you what, I will leave here now, I'll go home and you look for a 3D expert…"

Sim: [laughing uproariously]

Adams: [laughing] "…if you don't *find* one…"

Sim: [still laughing] *"…you know where to find me…"*

Adams: [laughing] "…call me in a week."

So, [laughing] four days later they called. Said "Okay, come down."

Sim: *Didn't even* take *a week.*

Adams: Didn't even take a week. There was nobody!

Sim: *Who knows from 3D in the 1960s?*

Adams: So I came down and I planned this album cover. It had lots of planets and other stuff on it. Remember the Grand Funk 3D album?

Sim: *I remember the name, but I couldn't think of a Grand Funk Railroad song if you put a gun to my head.*

Adams: But if it was those days right now, you'd be going "Oh, *yeah!* Grand Funk *Railroad!*" But, now? No, they're gone. So, I did the cover and I got Walt Simonson to help me because I knew Walt was intelligent and would understand the science, and will work detailed. He's a very meticulous guy. So he came into the studio and worked with me for days and it was totally insane. It was probably the most elaborate 3D project ever done. It had, like, nine layers of acetate and then a tenth layer and then an eleventh layer with the overlays for the black type. You know, you go through eleven layers of acetate you can't *see* through them unless you've got a big light shining on them. Anyway, so I did the thing and all the guides that you have to do and I sent it to them and they sent it to their printer and I got a call on Sunday morning and they said, "You're gonna come here and look at this because this isn't working—we're getting double imaging." And it's *Sunday morning*, right?

Sim: [laughing] Right.

Adams: And I said, "Well, it's Sunday morning." And they said, "We're sending a limo." [laughing] It's this printing plant in New Jersey. This stretch limo pulls up to the front door, I get in and I go out to New Jersey. I swear to God this is like the Mafia. The office that I walk into is as big as a small football field. And they've got the printed proof of the cover on the wall. And they say, "There it is." And they give me the glasses. Sure enough, double imaging. Now of course—and this is the point I was making earlier—*I believe in the science.* I'm not supposed to be getting double imaging. And I'm looking at the old comic books and comparing the colours to the old comic books. So I said,

"Who…did this proof? Can he come in here?" And they bring the guy into their big office. It's Sunday morning, they're all wearing gray suits and they all look they're going to pull out guns and shoot me 'cause it's not working and [laughs] it's very important: a lot of money is being spent. Guy comes in and I asked him "How did you get these colors?" and he said, "I matched your colors." I said, "I know, but…" He repeated, "I matched your colors." I said, "You don't really have to *match* these colours, these are old faded comic books, you don't have to match these colors you can make the colors brighter." He said, "I matched your colors." I said, "How did you get these colours?" He said, "Look, buddy. When I was a kid I used to see these 3D things, I would put the glasses on, nothing would happen. I don't understand the process, I don't understand what you're doing. I matched your colors. *This*. Is it."

Okay [laughing]. I said, 'Do you *mix* colors here?" He says, "Yeah, I mix colors here. I'm the best." "No doubt. You're the best. Okay. Good. Can we, uh, go to where you work and do this?" He says, "Yeah, we can." So, I excuse myself from these suits, right? And I go into the factory and this guy's got a huge area of the factory so clearly he's like [laughs] like a maven or something. He knows everything. He knows from mixing colors. So, I'm looking around and I'm looking at his buckets of color. And I said, "You don't color straight from the bucket, right?" He says, "Naw, I never do—I always mix my colors. I give the press guys the formula but I mix the colors and make sure it's right, first, on my press proof." Okay, how did you make the blue? "Well, I used the Cerulean, then I added some of this and some of that and then a little bit of green to throw it off…" Well, the green probably wasn't a good idea. So, we'll avoid the green but that's not the central problem. How did you make the red? And he said, "I made the red with Red Light, I used Vermillion, I made it with Magenta, I added a little…" I said hold on, hold on. You made the red with magenta? He said, "Yeah, I used a little magenta. I matched your color." I said, "Mm. That's not the *point*. The *point* is that Magenta has blue in it. And if it has blue in it, then the eye looking through the blue filter side of the glasses is going to see it. It's going to throw the whole idea off." He says, "Yeah, yeah. Right."

Sim: [laughs] *Doesn't believe you.*

Adams: I said, "*Don't* use your Red Light, *don't* use your Magenta, just stick to the pure reds and oranges, okay? If I tell you to do that, can you get the same color?" He says, "Aaah, I can get anything." Great. Just stay away from the Magenta. So he says, "Okay, fine." So I go back to the office. The guy is back in with the proof in, like, ten minutes. Brings it in, sticks it up on the wall, looks exactly like the other one. I said, "No Magenta?" He says, "No Magenta." I said, "Fine. Just stick around for a minute." He says, "What?" I said, "Look at it with these glasses." He said, "I'm tellin' ya, maybe it's something with my eyes, I've never seen 3D in my life. I never saw it. It doesn't exist for me." I said "Fine. [laughs] Just put the glasses on and take a look at it." He goes "All right, all right." Puts the glasses on. Looks at it. This look of shock comes on his face. He looks at the first one he brought out which clearly looks exactly the same and goes back to the new one and goes, "Holy *F--king S--t*. I don't believe it. Holy *S--t*." He's sticking his hand into it trying to get his fingers to go under the planet. And he says, "And that's all it is? The Magenta?" and I'm saying, "Yes, that's all it is. It's *science*."

Believe the *science*. If you follow the science, it will work. The guy flipped out. It was a successful cover and then Grand Funk Railroad went the way of all flesh.

But it's important to realize that when the guy brought the second proof in, I didn't put on the glasses myself. I handed him the glasses. Because if the science works, the science works—it's infallible.

Sim: *If he isn't lying and he left the Magenta out of it….*

Adams: Then it has to work. There's no way around the science. And that's the thing that you have to remember and what is so often forgotten—even by scientists—is that you have to follow the science. You have to say that if the earth has a magnetic field then it has magnetic lines of force. If the sun has a magnetic field then it has magnetic lines of force. The sun is the biggest electromagnet in our solar system. So it has to have electromagnetic lines. It has to. The fact that we can't see them is meaningless. To say that the planets would "go" anywhere *except* on those electromagnetic lines—as filled as they are with iron—it's preposterous. Why would they go anywhere else? If you needed *proof* then all you have to do is to measure the distances between the planets and you'll see that they're on those lines. If it *wasn't* the case, you would see irregularities *between* the lines and those irregularities are not there. I find scientists who try to argue against these kinds of things to be very strange and they're very hard for me to deal with. If I can take a globe of the earth and I can take all of the continents and move them toward one another by making the earth smaller—following the documented rifts that are under the oceans that have already been measured by scientists—and if the continents all fit neatly together, that has to be what Sherlock Holmes used to call [laughs] a *clue*.

Sim: *I think what you find particularly irritating is that the science that you're talking about in the various disciplines that you've had to familiarize yourself with is the very basic science in each of those disciplines.*

Adams: Yes, as I said way back at the beginning, I don't know the really complicated science. I don't know the math, I don't know the algebra and the algorithms and the Latin names. All I know is the bedrock, foundational and infallible scientific facts.

It's like the guy who worked on the *Jurassic Park*

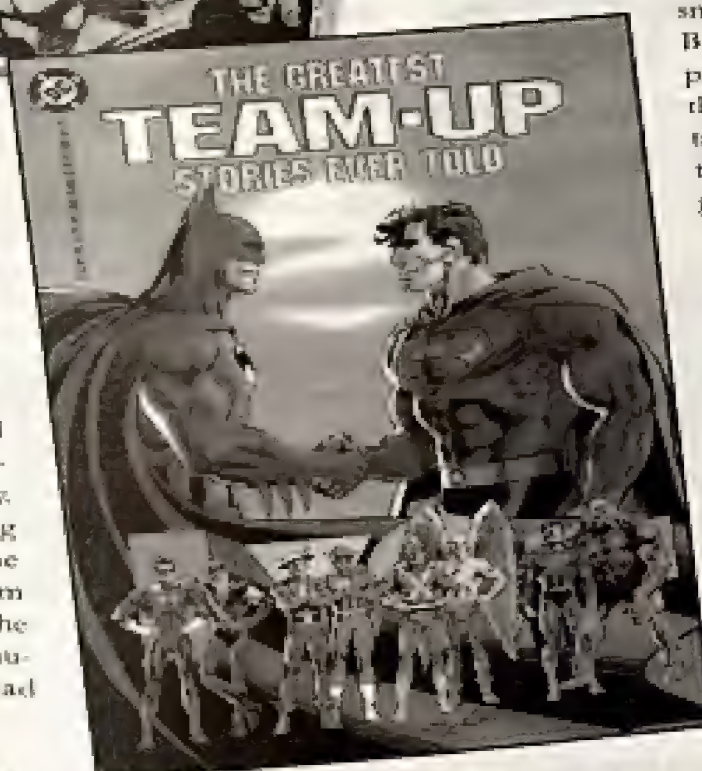
movies, Stan Winston. He wanted to build a Tyrannosaurus Rex for Steven Spielberg. He wanted to build a *whole* Tyrannosaurus that articulated. It couldn't run or anything, but it could articulate. He did an incredible job, apparently. And he put the thing together, and what he did was he used titanium steel. He found that as he moved the Tyrannosaurus around, the head would snap off.

Sim: [laughs]

Adams: [laughing] What he had to do was that he had to build the upper portion of the Tyrannosaurus and then the bottom portion and then connect both of them to this really heavy titanium steel bed so that they would operate independently of one another and then he would match them together. Now, to me [laughs] that's a *clue*. It makes all the sense in the world to me.

There are two palaeontologists who come on the air on the Discovery channel and argue about whether the Tyrannosaurus Rex is a scavenger or a predator. The one palaeontologist says that he can't be a predator because he's too big. Forget the fact that his prey is also big [laughs]

Sim: "Big" is a relative term when you're talking about dinosaurs.

Adams: Yeah. If they're being chased, they're going to run at roughly the same speed as the Tyrannosaurus if they're roughly the same size, but we'll forget that. If the Tyrannosaurus could run at what would be the speed you would picture for his size and he turned on a dime, his head would snap off. He can't do it. It's not possible. So he must have been a scavenger. So you look at his arms and his arms are small and you look at this and you look at that and here's this proof that he's a scavenger. The other palaeontologist says, "No, he was a predator, he could run, he could stop on a dime." The first palaeontologist says "No, that's stupid, it's ridiculous—it doesn't follow the science." Well, they're both *trying* to follow the science. You understand both of their points of view. But the fact is, if gravity was one quarter of what it is today in the Tyrannosaurus' time, all of their concerns would be answered. He would be able to run, he would be able to stop on a dime without his head snapping off. That's the answer. But what's happening is that the palaeontologists are not talking to the geologists, neither of them is talking to the physicists, none of them are talking to the cosmologists and they're not accomplishing anything relative to How. The. Universe. Works. The more they learn, the more specialized they become. I'm talking to a palaeontologist from the Museum of Alberta and he sent me a letter saying, "I'm very intrigued by your theory, blah blah blah" and I've tried to convince him that mammals migrated to the north part of the planet and marsupials migrated to the southern part of the planet near the end of the Dinosaur Age and essentially that's why we don't give birth to children that we then carry around in our pockets. Because marsupials stayed on Australia and Antarctica, the mammals stayed in North America and Asia, populated like crazy and they won the competition. In fact, by the time it got to modern day there were marsupials in Australia and New Zealand and hardly anywhere else. The mammals had taken over the rest of the world because of the coincidence of how the continents broke up—that and how dinosaurs became extinct. They migrated hemispherically until the continents broke up and then it was no longer possible because of new barriers to migration like the Mediterranean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico and so on and they started to die off. Now this palaeontologist is exactly the person to help me because he goes on palaeontological digs in Antarctica except that he only writes me a letter once every four *months*. And he says, "Guess what

we've discovered? We've discovered the remains of dinosaurs that we previously had only found in North America." So, doesn't that mean that they migrated hemispherically? [laughs] Darn. No letter. Which I understand. It's far more difficult for him to come forward and actually agree with something that he basically already agrees with because he would be muddying his career. I'm not putting my career on the line. I'm not a palaeontologist, I'm a comic-book artist. He has far more concern than I, for saying that dinosaurs migrated hemispherically.

Sim: *But at the same time, he's also, presumably, someone who got into the sciences for the same reason that you did: he's interested in the truth.*

Adams: Of course. But he also must pay the rent.

Sim: *He'll get drawn to a theory because he's got all of these questions and very few answers.*

Adams: There are so many questions in science that you just wouldn't believe it.

Sim: *And if the answers are all, as you're indicating, essentially very basic…*

Adams: And most of them are. Look, I'm sure there are a lot of scientific questions out there whose answers are *not* basic. Those that go forward in evolutionary time. But, if you study how crystals are structured and how they work, if you study virtually any branch of science you'll find that many of the most obvious questions, going backward, can be answered by saying "The universe and virtually everything in it is growing."

The thing about any growing body is that it follows natural laws. You have the moon as an example and how it's attracted by the earth and it really doesn't have much of a spin on it. You'll notice that one side of the moon is always facing the earth. I think there's a little pendulum motion there, but essentially it's facing the earth. Logically, you have to think of this as being very strange. Why would that happen? I mean, it faces the earth *perfectly*. It's not as if there's a gyroscope inside of it or a man pointing and the moon has to follow the direction of that finger. There has to be some kind of reason. You're used to it and so it's not shocking to you. So what I did was—when I was working on it—I realized through doing these maps for my film and doing a map of the moon that the moon not only had grown but that the side that faces us all the time has all of these large "spread" areas—the great spread "mares." Some scientists used to say that they're meteor hits, some scientists used say that they're volcanic spreads. Little hard to imagine volcanoes on the moon. It's *stupid*.

Sim [laughs] *Wally Wood's visuals aside.*

Adams: So you have the moon. Material is being created in the core of the moon just as it's being created inside of all reasonable sized moons—and we have a pretty good-sized moon there.

Like a geode.

Now a geode is one of those crystals that you buy and you can put them on a buzz saw and cut them in half and you can see the crystals on the inside growing *seemingly* toward the inside but really pushing outward. But then the outside of them looks like a moon or a rough rock. If you take that geode and examine its structure—just looking at how it works which is a wonderful thing to do—you can imagine this thing growing. If I said to you, well, I can make a gas flow through the rock of this geode and it flows inside of the geode through the crystal towards the centre and when it gets there the various atoms will attach to the crystal of that geode and will add to the crystal and will add to the interior crystal surfaces. Now try to imagine those little atoms building a crystal as you've seen in the stop-motion photography and now those crystals are pushing outward. So the crystals push outward but when they get to the surface that crystal is kind of crappy and it's got extra minerals in it. And what that geode does is spread laterally like the crust of the earth or the crust of the moon. Think of this geode as a moon. You've got a moon and you've got a geode and you've got these crystals that are all pure on the *inside* of the moon, but on the *outside* of the moon they get diffuse. They push outward and they get bigger. These geodes will grow in sand, they will grow in the desert, they'll grow in ash, in mountains, so clearly they're not being fed by the sand or the ash. They're being fed by gases that are going up and through them. So the moon is like this. And inside the moon there are atoms that are going in and they're collecting in there and the moon is starting to create its own atoms. So now you have a moon that's collecting and creating these atoms and they're spreading across the moon's surface. And I'm watching the moon and I'm watching these spread areas and I think, Gee. Since the moon faces the earth at all times I wonder if those same spread areas are on the *other* side of the moon as well. Because if the moon is always facing us, then the gravitational pull of the earth on our side of the moon has to be greater than on the opposite side of the moon. Logically, if this growth that I'm theorizing about is taking place inside of the moon, the gravity of the earth pulling on it would make it grow more toward us rather than the other side. So if there are mares on the other side that kind of blows my entire theory out of the water. In that case I'll close up my book and go home [laughs]. So I tortured myself with that thought for about a week. And then I went out and I got a photograph of the other side of the moon. And sure enough, there are no spreading areas on the other side of the moon. I

Adams: "The [magic marker] company's colour chart...was...chaos. There's no sense to it....They're not arranging them scientifically."

Another plate from the late-seventies Adams portfolio

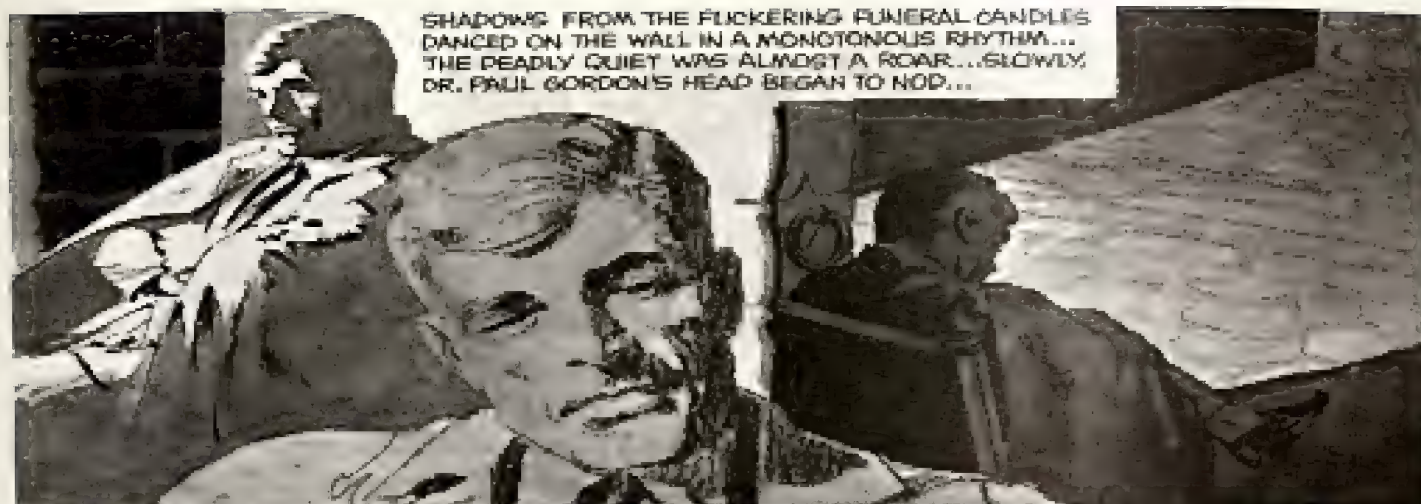
thought, if I drew this moon and I made a big hollow area inside I could draw extra material on the side that faces the earth because that's what's growing and spreading outwards. If I make a "humpy mountain" on the inside, toward the earth, that side of the moon is thicker and denser and therefore more gravitationally oriented toward the earth. So my suspicion is that, as the spreading area grows outward toward the earth the interior has gotten thicker on that side, so it will stay facing the earth just as a weight hanging from a string will be gravitationally pulled toward whatever is gravitationally acting upon it. The moon itself is held in orbit, but the interior weight of the moon inclines towards the earth. Now all that I've just said is very sensible, very logical if you understand how crystal growth work and if you understand the concept of spreading surfaces and if you understand how gravity pulls at something and tugs at something.

Sim: *Growth is the universal state of existence.*

Adams: To me, that's what science is about.

Sim: *Ideally, as you say, it explains how things work.*

Adams: Yes. And it's the way that I've approached everything in my life, essentially.

For example, I do storyboards for advertising agencies and, time was, if you went to an advertising agency and you did a storyboard assignment there, they had magic markers. Their magic markers were never a good selection. I could bring my own markers, but if I bought markers I still noticed that my markers were set up in a system that only an insane person would use. Magic markers are made by the various companies, but when you looked at the company's colour chart it was like looking at chaos. There's no sense to it. So, I realised that these people are doing a good job—their markers are

The use of three different illustration techniques to indicate time lapse was years ahead of its time in 1967: "Curse of the Vampire," Creepy *No.14.*

good—but they're not arranging them scientifically. So what I did was, I designed a box for a hundred markers and I did the cool grays and the warm grays on the top, on the bottom started my yellows and yellow-reds and oranges into my reds and from reds into darker reds and then magenta; reds with blue in them into purples. From my purples I went into blues, from my blues into my aquas, my aquas into my greens; my greens into my olives and my olives into my browns and my browns into my lighter and darker browns up to my grays at the top. Very solid, very scientific: it follows all the theories of how colors work. Greatest box of markers in the world and you can't find them in an advertising agency or anywhere but at Continuity. So when I started my studio, I outfitted each one of the desks at the front of my studio with a box of these markers. If anyone was working on a specific job that required extra markers, they could have those as well, but essentially they worked off of the box of a hundred. That way anybody who worked on any job that we did would use the same markers as everyone else working on that job and they could transmit the information about their color choices to the next guy. So you'd be using the same blue on the car, this

Adams: "People are nuts. Bad thinking is *everywhere.*"

flesh tone would match that flesh tone, the black people would be done with the same browns and so we developed a system. What I did was I took the idea of the markers that should have been at the advertising agencies and I said, "Okay I don't want to *do* your storyboards here at your place because you haven't got enough of a range of markers. I'll do them back at my place." And I would set up this system so people at Continuity could draw and color these storyboards. We started cranking out storyboards for different advertising agencies...and basically just beat everybody else's storyboards in the field. Totally blew the competition away. The only entity that might be better than Continuity would be a one-man operation with a guy who bought his own markers and did everything on his own, a guy like Casey Jones. A client might prefer his work to ours but we were both consistent. The difference was that his work was consistent because he did it all himself and wouldn't let anyone else touch it. Ours was consistent because of the system I developed. Within two years, a small company opened up called Gem and [laughs] used the same system. A company called Diamond opened up and used the same system. We pioneered the storyboard studio system at Continuity. But prior to that it had never occurred to anyone else to do this even though all of the pieces of this puzzle had been sitting there in complete and universal disorder for years. I'm not explaining anything to you that really takes any hard thinking. That's essentially how I approach everything. I just look for the most sensible and orderly and scientific approach that I can. And what tends to happen is that I excite this level of profound apprehension and then when what I'm saying works I'm looked upon as if I'm this [laughs] strange being from another planet with superhuman abilities, when all I'm doing is taking the most rational approach to a problem. I would say things like "Why not just drop the drawing out to a colour and then you don't have to have any black on it at all?" [fearful voice] "Drop it out to a colour? I've never heard of that." They used to do it back in the EC comics, everyone would do drop-out colour. [fearful voice] "Oh, no." [fearful *and* belligerent] "That's not *true.*" Well [laughs] okay.

Sim: *"How did they get this to look like this, then?"*

Adams: [laughs] Yeah.

Sim: *"Here's this EC comic. How did they get this to look like this if they didn't use colour holds?"*

Adams: People are nuts. Bad thinking is *everywhere.* And when one comes along and tries to make changes, you're looked upon as some kind of an interloper who's trying to mess things up. And that's

how it is with science, as well. I come along and I say "You know, guys [laughs] we've been doing it wrong for 150 years. We ought to start thinking of this as a *whole* science, not a bunch of fragmented areas of fine-tuned specialization. Let me pull it together: clearly the planet's growing. Think about this logically. You can't say *just* the earth grows. Once you say that the earth grows you have to say that *all* the planets grow." I have an argument within our group, a guy says that meteorites don't grow. They're parts of exploded planets. The sun grows, the moon grows, the earth grows, the planets grow, but meteorites don't grow. What's the rationale for leaving out meteorites? If one thing grows, they all grow—unless you can come up with a good reason why one of them doesn't grow.

Sim: *I think, as you say, that one of the problems is the urge towards specialization in the sciences. You end up with a guy who wants to specialize in meteorites. "Science is just so huge and there are so many different disciplines that I could never become an expert in them all so I'm just going to grab this little project over here and from now on meteorites are going to be 'my thing'". But once you separate something like that out from, as you say, what is the 'integrated whole' of science and try to understand it as a discrete subject from all other aspects of science the odds are that you're never going to get close to determining the nature of reality. And, of course, determining the nature of reality was the motivation behind the development of the sciences in the first place.*

Adams: Like the debate over whether the Tyrannosaurus was a scavenger or a predator. They're not looking at the big picture. They're not saying 'Why don't we look at some *other* sciences and see what *they* can tell us? Maybe we can find the answer there because clearly we have completely opposing and irresolvable points of view."

I do these computerized animated commercials. I'm trying as much as possible to get my computer people to *unlearn* the word "No". Just don't ever say "No." Say "I'll try it" or "I'll think about it" or "I'll work on it," but never just say "No." Because that's never the answer. I remind them that if the computer can do this and then the computer can do that, then obviously it can do this! It couldn't possibly be able to do this and that without being able to do this. All you have to do is to figure out why and what button to push." [fearful voice] "Ahhh. It's not going to work." "It's going to work. It has to work." It's logical. It. *Has.* To. Work. And a couple of hours later or the next day they come by and say, "Well, here it is." Never do they come by [laughs]...it's a great lesson...never do they come by and say, "Well, you were right." [laughs] and if you expect that you're wasting your time. They just come by and say, "Well, here it is."

Sim: [laughs] *That's the best that you can hope for.*

Adams: That's the best that you can hope for. The manager of the gym is never going to come up and say, "Well, Neal, you were right. The floor was filthy."

Sim: *It's a different way of looking at the world. It's starting with the assumption that whatever the answer is in whatever situation and to whatever question it's probably pretty basic. We've just been overlooking the solution so let's take the whole thing down to its most basic elements and re-examine it from the ground up. Let's say—just hypothetically—that you can't clean a dirty floor with dirty water [laughs] and see what that does when it comes to solving the problem.*

Adams: Let's get down on our knees and rub it with spit and see if it comes off. Then you'll know something. I took the guy aside and said, "You know what? One of the things I learned when I was managing a carousel is 'sometimes the only way to get what you want is to get down on your hands and knees and do it yourself.'" You can't convince people by telling them but if you just get down on your hands and knees with the scrub brush and do it yourself...first of all, nobody can deny that what you're saying is true if you can show them. Second

Dave Sim on Neal Adams reference: "What are the best black-and-white copies of the work that I've got?" "Fair Exchange" from Eerie No.23 *topped the list.*

Adams page done at age sixteen

of all, you get the respect of everybody because you're willing to do what they're doing. What happens is you become a totally different person in their eyes because you're not a manager anymore you're "one of the guys" and you gain their respect and you also learn something. If you're too far "above it" and you think, as a manager, that getting down on your hands and knees is beneath you, then you'll never learn anything.

Sim: *Which is why the cleaning crew could convince him that this all dated back to the original patina getting wiped out by harsh chemicals. Because, as a manager, that let him off the book.*

Adams: It certainly did because he could tell everybody with the voice of authority what the history of the filthy floor was. Only with me, I don't listen to the voice, I listen to what he actually told me. And if he's trying to tell me that a dirty floor *has* to be dirty [laughs] well that needs thought. The same thing is true with science.

Back to Canada

And that was it for lunch. The sun was well past its zenith and I had only booked the car until around 6 pm. I would be paying some late fees at this rate. You don't really think of that in a once-in-a-lifetime situation, though. And I had gotten Neal Adams' uninterrupted attention on the subject of Johnstone & Cushing. If it had proven to be something less than the photorealistic Camelot of the imagination of my mind's eye — more like a Jules Feiffer cartoon with all the knights errant obsessing about their houses in Connecticut, golf, sports cars and psychiatry — I had at least come as close to it as I was going to get with a firsthand account from someone whose precocious talent in his early twenties had gained him partial entrée – as much entrée as he had been interested in, anyway — into that particular world.

Marilyn called the driver's cellphone number which he had given us and told him we'd be out back waiting for him in a few minutes.

How fast the time goes by, I thought.

Enough time that Neal Adams and Dave Sim were probably older than Elmer Wexler had been at the time of Neal's traumatic meeting with him. And

Spectre *No.3 pgs 19 and 20. Dave Sim: "Look at what this guy is doing!"*

Another spectacular double-page spread from Strange Adventures 208 *(from 1968)*

Josh Adams was the same age now as Neal Adams the boy wonder had been who had taken Johnstone & Cushing by storm.

Sim: *Do you look back at your own work and see "peaks"?*

Adams: No, I see drawing as an evolutionary process, and I don't see it as being "progressive." The evolutionary nature of the process means that I went through what I felt like going through at the time. And much as I recognize evolutionary processes in other artists, I honestly don't look at myself in the same way. I could sit down and do a "Deadman" story right now and it would have that same quality because I know that particular style. I chose to go away from it and to do something else.

Here: you can go through the Warren stuff that I did and you can see a half-dozen different styles. Every story was done a different way.

Sim: [the Neal Adams scholar squirrel] *There was even the one three-image montage in "Curse of the Vampire" where each image was done in a different style—one in ink outline with wash, one in charcoal pencil, one in full ink with washes—to indicate the passage of time. That was, on so many levels, years ahead of its time.*

Adams: I did one entire story in gray magic marker. I did one whole story in pencil. The story of the assassin-kid on the rooftop ["Thrillkill"] was told in a completely diffetent way from any of the stories that I did. To me, it's a matter of experimentation. I like the idea of flipping around like that. And if I listened to other people, I would never experiment. I would do what they wanted me to do and that would be it. That's not what I choose to do. I choose to make my own choices.

Sim: *In my case, my emphasis with Neal Adams came down to: what are the best* black-and-white *copies of the work that I've got? And that meant that I skewed towards the Warren material and whatever was in the two* Art of Neal Adams *and the two* Neal Adams Treasuries. *Because I could actually* see *what you were doing without trying to look at it through muddy off-register colour.*

Adams: Well, if you look at the pure black-and-white you go, "Right, it's Joe Kubert" [laughs] because he knew how to do blacks.

Sim: [Graduate student Neal Adams scholar squirrel] *Well, it's not as Joe Kubertish as was your Adam Strange sample you did even before you started working at Archie.*

Adams: That one was…Gil Kane…Dan Barry…Alex Toth-*ish*…*Old* Alex Toth. You know back in those days, I was bouncing around like a ping-pong ball. I was doing Wally Wood, I was doing lots of different guys.

Sim: *At the same time, I have to say, that from the Warren material on, it was so many miles beyond what anyone else was doing in terms of composition, line weight, line density, spotting of blacks. I was like twelve when I started reading Deadman, and it took me a while—I think it wasn't until you were working on The Spectre and you started doing the first real over-the-top double page compositions, with a single figure stretched through one diagonal panel across two pages …it finally called so much attention to itself—*"Look at what this guy is doing!" *that I then started looking at what sort of lines you were doing, how accurate the faces were…*

Adams: Well, I was the Monster That Ate Detroit.

Sim: [laughs] *You sure were. You sure were.*

Adams: They cut me loose from those newspaper strip prescribed spaces and gave me enough

space to do big double-page spreads. I remember going in to Sol Harrison and saying, "Can we do double-page spreads?" And Sol said, "No. Because the pages won't match. They can't match up images across the gutter [*between the two pages*]." And I walked away from Sol saying to myself "*Why* did I ask him?" [*Sim laughs*] What stupider thing could I do than to ask Sol Harrison *another* question? That's the dumbest thing I could have done. Forget it.

Sim: *Like he's going to say, "Say! That's a* swell *idea, Neal.* Double-page spreads." [laughs]

Adams: [laughs] Right. "No, we can't do double-page spreads."

We arrived out back to see a limousine go hurtling by on the road a few dozen yards away. "He'll be back," I said. "It's his job."

I realized then that the limousines were my version of Tom Sheuer's Jaguar in a lot of ways. Like Neal I had never learned how to drive but unlike Neal I lived in a town that didn't have wall-to-wall taxicabs that could be summoned with a wave of your hand. I also thought for the first time in years of the fact that my decision to not learn how to drive had been directly related to Alex Raymond when I had first found out at the age of (twelve? Thirteen?) that Raymond had died in a sports car crash in 1956, the year I was born. I always wondered if it had happened the day I was born and it wasn't until recently that I found out it had been September 6 of that year. It had seemed ominous—literally—to me at that age before I even knew the meaning of the word. I could sense that I had my own suppressed urge to high-speed driving and that I would just be asking for trouble if I ever allowed myself to get behind the wheel.

As I had heard the story, it had been Stan Drake's new sports car (Tom Sheuer's lusted-after Jaguar perhaps?) and he had taken it over to Raymond's place to show it off and he had let Raymond take it for a spin with Stan Drake in the passenger seat.

When I found out that detail I had wondered if there hadn't been a lot of the downside of the "top dog" syndrome in that story. Here was Alex Raymond who had single-handedly invented the photorealism style in *Rip Kirby* and there was Stan Drake who had certainly taken that look to a new plateau and who was now able, with the fruit of his labours on *Heart of Juliet Jones* (inside of two years on the strip, he had overtaken both Raymond and Milt Caniff in number of subscribing papers) and as a highly paid illustrator in his own right to buy a bright, shiny new sports car. Had Alex Raymond felt compelled to assert his pre-eminence behind the wheel? "Here, kid, let me show you what this baby can do with a man behind the wheel?" Had it been pure one-upmanship: on the one hand between and elder and younger suburbanite and on the other between the heavyweight champion of his chosen field and the leading contender for his championship belt, locking metaphorical horns *mano a mano?*

An Adams/Berni Wrightson collaboration from Weird Western Tales *12 (July 1972)*

Raymond died in the crash and Stan Drake lived.

I wonder what Leonard Starr's psychiatrist might have had to say about that one.

We glided back across the Rainbow Bridge at a very sensible speed in a vehicle built like a Sherman Tank with barely enough time for a few minutes of chit-chat before we were at the small building on the Canadian side where they sell the tickets for the *Maid of the Mist.* They actually transport all of the components of the boats on trucks along narrow roads on the walls of the Gorge and then assemble them at the river level. It's really the only way to get them down there.

My reverie had caught up with my Neal Adams time period as we descended the winding cement ramps that take you down to the elevator that then takes you down to river level. I started enthusing again about "the monster who ate Detroit."

"That double page spread you did of Deadman and his rival The Eagle twisting his arm up behind his back. And you had put what looked like a whole sheet of that flecked tone over the two foreground figures. Of course we all had to go out and find that tone and start using it on everything..."

Neal was as vaguely pleased as Will Eisner had been when I had enthused about Will's Tudor City studio look of the late 1940s. It was a long time ago and it was hard to feel any personal involvement

with what I was praising. I have the same problem now with the early issues of *Cerebus*. All you can do is just let someone enthuse about the work and look as interested as you can bring yourself to pretend to be. Because you being interested, for some reason, is a big part of it. Neal had spent a lot of time pretending to still be interested in what he had done almost forty years ago and he was very good at it, glancing back at me with a smile every now and then as I followed him down those concrete ramps.

"What we didn't understand was that you had also pioneered the idea of light-boxing your pictures and using the process to enlarge figures and then play with the positioning for optimum dramatic effect and composition. We're all trying to figure out how to draw part of a huge forearm down here and part of a huge bicep up here and how to get the proportions on the face right when you've only got half a face to draw. But, of course, you had worked all of that out in a much smaller drawing and then enlarged it so all of the *compositional* drawing problems were solved in miniature and then you just had to work out the line densities at the inking stage. And since that two-page spread close-up was really pushing the outside of the envelope of how large you could make the picture, you put the flecked tone on only that panel. 'Here's an exception in size and exception in execution in the same panel.'"

The smile was flagging now. After you've said, "Yeah, I was the Monster who Ate Detroit all right," once, what else is there to say without repeating yourself? I finally got myself back under control as the four of us piled onto the elevator and listened to the spiel on the way down.

The smile returned when we had been issued our new plastic ponchos (blue on the Canadian side—why I don't know) and I managed again to get mine on backwards. That was when we started talking about film which interested him a great deal and me very little. Specifically, I was curious as to how much footage Neal owned of the many interviews he must've done over the years.

"Lots," he said, rolling his eyes, wondering what I was driving at even as he tried not to notice how long it had taken me to finally get my disposable blue poncho turned around the right way, my head in the slot with the hood and my arms in the sleeves.

I wondered if there wasn't a market that film *buyers*, as distinct from film *makers*, were missing out on. On the extreme example I cited—The Beatles' *Let It Be* film—there evidently exists thousands of hours of footage of the four of them attempting to record the album. They were young and unbelievably rich, so they hired x number of cameramen to film everything from morning to night, 24/7. Eventually a miniscule percentage of that footage was made into the commercially released *Let It Be* film. But, with the DVD technology today where you can put unimaginably large amounts of film footage on a single disk, it seemed to me that they were missing a good bet by not servicing the Beatle Devotee market by doing a boxed set of DVD's of every inch of footage that exists. For $100 or $200. When it comes to Beatle Devotees you could really set your own price and sell them (four weeks worth of footage? Six weeks? That is, if the Beatle Devotee sat down to watch it all, it would take him or her four weeks or six weeks of 24/7 viewing to see it all) for whatever you wanted to charge. $400, $500?

"I sure wouldn't want to watch it," Neal said.

Well, no, nor would I. But I wasn't talking about normal people I was talking about Obsessive Devotees. I switched gears. Consider a film like, say, *The Hustler*. For a certain number of people it's their favourite film of all time. Let's say there exists a hundred hours of footage. No normal person would want to watch Paul Newman flub his lines or do eight different tries at the same line with different emphases, but a Hustler Devotee would. Just for the cost of dubbing all that footage onto DVD's with no organization or sifting or selecting you could charge Devotees hundreds of dollars for $3 worth of plastic.

I've never gotten anywhere with this discussion, I have to say. People have too much reverence for filmmaking as an art, I think—especially people like Neal Adams who ache to make films themselves—to even venture into intellectual proximity of what I'm suggesting: that there is a whole other impulse out there towards completism which will pay a premium price to own, as an example, every second of footage of Neal Adams talking that exists even if that amounts to 400 hours of largely redundant material.

There was a forensic interest on Neal's part in what I was saying. It was a new idea, suggesting that DVD technology had transformed the commercial possibilities inherent in film that was potentially indescribably lucrative for a miniscule investment at the "low end" of filmmaking where filmmaking was just a matter of dubbing an exhaustive inventory onto DVD's. But if the forensic Neal Adams was half-heartedly interested, the aspiring filmmaker was appalled. Revolted probably comes closer to the truth, so I dropped it and asked if he was working on any films right now as we shuffled down the last

Dondi by Irwin Hasen

two ramps to the *Maid of the Mist.*

To my surprise it was Marilyn Adams who answered. "Yes, we're working on a documentary about Irwin Hasen."

She pronounced it "*Haze*-en." All these years I've been pronouncing it "*Hass*-en." You live long enough, you will find out everything.

"I didn't realize that you work with Neal on his films," I said.

"I want to work on every film possible because I love the business. I grew up in L.A. and I grew up surrounded by the film business. My best friend's father was a movie director so I used to hang out around the movie lots. You really can't help but get involved in the business if you grow up in L.A. I went to Hollywood High so a lot of my life was 'show bizzy.' And I, personally, would like to win an Oscar."

I laughed at the sheer matter-of-factness of the statement and Neal smiled appreciatively.

She laughed at her own unbridled ambition and added, "And I'd like *Neal* to win an Oscar. So, yes, I'll do whatever is necessary to get some projects done."

"Roughly speaking you could say that Neal and I 'produce' the films together. That includes everything from hiring talent to running around wiping sweat from actors' brows, to getting props, negotiating good deals on equipment, arranging the catering, transportation, insurance." She laughs again. "Begging favors."

Irwin Hasen

"We shot him for two days at his apartment and studio and we're editing that part together," Neal observed. "We have other parts that will have him walking down the street and talking about his neighbourhood, about all his adventures he had over the years as a comic-strip artist, how it feels to be the shortest comic artist in the world."

I bit. "Is he really?"

Neal laughed, "No, I'm just kidding. He probably is, but I'm just kidding about it."

"How tall is he?"

"Well, he's five feet…"

Waiting for the finish, I walked right into another one. Still waiting, I finally clue in when I hear Neal laughing. "And that's it?"

Neal still laughing, "I love doing that. And you know there's a part of Irwin that doesn't like to talk about it, but the moment you *don't* talk about it, he *does*? 'Everybody loves me,' he says, 'I'm a cute little artist.' Well, that's true, Irwin, you sure are. He has a lot of amazing stories, amazing anecdotes that we have on tape. I'll tell you a couple.

"The first one is about Irwin doing a comic strip early in his career—before *Dondi*—based on a Gertrude Berg radio show called *The Goldbergs* on which she was the producer, the writer, the director. She was everything, an absolute genius with the team she put together on that show and it had a huge audience. Somebody decided it would be a good idea to do a comic strip based on the radio show and Irwin was picked to do it and he did it and, in fact, he got really good response, but it was only in one newspaper, it was so darned ethnic. But he was happy doing it and he got to meet Gertrude Berg and she kinda liked him. Anyway, it was Gertrude Berg's birthday and her assistant invited Irwin to come for a birthday breakfast celebration that she and Gertrude Berg and Gertrude Berg's secretary would have together in one of these fancy hotels in New York. Being the man-about-town that he was—and continues to be—he was delighted to accept the invitation. It was just Irwin, the secretary and Gertrude Berg. Pretty nice. If it was me, I'd have gone as well because I thought that woman was a genius. Anyway, they're sitting at the table having this breakfast and Irwin says 'This young man comes over, he's got pimples on his neck and he's very thin and he comes over and he bends down and gives Gertrude Berg a kiss and stands back up and wishes her a happy birthday and Gertrude says, "Irwin? This is Frank Sinatra, a young singer who's working down at the Palladium on 42nd Street."' So Irwin not only was at this amazing breakfast, he got to meet Frank Sinatra when very few people knew who Frank Sinatra was."

We shuffled aboard the *Maid of the Mist* with everyone's plastic ponchos rustling in unison and missed getting a spot in the prow (my favourite spot) as I digested the Frank Sinatra anecdote, but we got a nice rail side spot facing the American Falls.

"Later on in his career, because Irwin was a celebrity—comic *strip* artists are celebrities, comic *book* artists aren't—he was invited to judge the Miss Universe contest and that happened in Atlantic City which was MC'd by this very nice young man who impressed Irwin terribly in no small part because he seemed to be able to pronounce all of the beautiful young women's names no matter what country they came from. He was mightily impressed by that. Now

One of the four Maid of the Mist boats which run from both the American and Canadian side passing the base of the American Falls.

as a judge he was the celebrity and the Master of Ceremonies was just the Master of Ceremonies, but he thought this guy did a really good job. So, the next day in Atlantic City Irwin's down on the beach and the young man comes along and Irwin says, 'You were the Master of Ceremonies at the pageant last night. I'm Irwin, the cartoonist. I was one of the judges." "Oh, pleased to meet you." Irwin said, "I thought you did pretty well last night." And the fellow, of course, says "Oh, thanks." And Irwin asks him, "So what else do you do?" And the guy says, "Actually I have an interview at NBC that I'm heading out to Hollywood for as soon as I'm done here. They need someone for a talk show." And Irwin says, 'I'm sorry, what was your name again?" And he says, "Johnny Carson."

The Falls in 1859 (photo by William England)

"Never really led to anything I guess," I deadpanned,

"Never really led to anything but at least he got to meet Irwin Hasen on the beach in Atlantic City."

"I'm sure anytime Johnny Carson and Frank Sinatra got together that would be the first thing that would come up. 'Remember the *Dondi* guy?' Seriously, though, that's pretty impressive."

"Irwin has a lot of great stories like that. Someone dropped off a radio show for me from that time period. And it's about a radio detective who goes to Nazi Germany undercover and they name him Irwin Hasen.

"'I'm just a cartoonist,' he says on the show, 'I'm not a very tall person. I'm not very imposing. I'm just five-foot four.'"

Neal laughed. "And I thought, 'Five-foot *four*?' They had to make him four inches taller than he really is just to make it seem realistic. Nobody's going to believe he's five-foot even."

Switching gears, as we pulled out into the river, gliding past the American Falls with its easily overlooked catwalks dotted with yellow plastic ponchos, I asked if he had ever gotten any advice from any big names in the illustration field.

"I was all of eighteen years old and my mother managed to get me some work from a magazine called *Mystery Digest*. My Mom who had worked for Cable News Company managed to finagle an introduction to the publisher for me. It turned out not to be so much of a favour for me as it was for him because he got an artist who would do drawings for $19 each. I felt kind of ripped off by the whole thing. It got me work and I was glad to get the check, because at the time I was getting $32 for pencilling, inking, writing, and lettering an entire Archie page. To do these illustrations, I had to visit the writer who turned out to be the writer of almost the whole *Mystery Digest* using different names. Because he couldn't afford other writers. And after my second or third trip to see him, he said, 'I've shown your artwork to my other illustrator and he thinks you're pretty good but he'd like to talk to you and maybe give you some advice.' Now I was eighteen years old and I wasn't really interested in advice from anybody. You could bring God down, I was too much of an a--hole to listen to advice over a phone from a guy who was doing black-and-white drawings for $19 apiece. So I kind of begged off and said 'Thank you that's very nice I'd love to talk to him but I've gotta go home now and do my Archie pages.' And I guess I was enough of a bulls--er that I sounded sincere so anyway, the next trip, I delivered my drawings and again he said that this other illustrator would like to speak to me and deliver some encouraging words. And so I thought, well I'm trapped [laughs] and I'm going to have to listen to this old a--hole tell me how to draw. So I got on the phone in all my quiet arrogance and, you know, you don't really know how stupid you are until you do something incredibly stupid. So here I was pretending to listen to this guy and not listening to him at all and he was giving me very good advice. And I wasn't listening. A couple of months later when I got my shot at Johnstone & Cushing I was in the back of the place looking at the *Illustrator's Annuals* that they had a whole stack of in the back of the studio, looking at and devouring this fantastic work by these illustrators over the years and I'm running across these illustrations that are done in this very line-y sort of style with splotchy ink which are very, very cool and I noticed the signature of this illustrator named Dave Stone-Martin. 'That looks awfully familiar.' So I went I home and dug out these old copies of *Mystery Digest* and I

opened them to the pages of the other illustrator and there was the same signature. David Stone-Martin. David Stone-Martin who had taken time out of the middle of his day to talk to me, the a--hole, and I'm too f--king stupid to listen to what he had to say.

"I don't know what the lesson was that I learned from that, but I hope I learned a lesson because my cheeks go red when I think about it."

He looked so genuinely let down by himself, even that many years later, it was nice to have something that was pretty much guaranteed to take his mind off of it as we came past the headland below Terrapin Point. I smiled.

"The ubiquitous rainbow...leaps into vivid life whenever the sunlight strikes the billows of mist rising from the Falls base."

"Turn around, Neal, I don't think you're going to want to miss this."

His eyebrows went up and he turned around slowly. And there it was, filling his peripheral vision from left to right and top to bottom. And continuing to fill his peripheral vision as he turned and kept turning trying to take it all in.

"HOLY S--T" he said, barely audible over the roar of the tumbling waters, and then repeated, "HOLY S--T!!" as the boat captain completed his spiel with "Ladies and Gentlemen. . .*Niagara Falls!*"

It was pretty much the same deal as the Bridal Veil Falls only in this case we were caught in a drenching downpour out on the river itself, the boat pitching up and down surrounded on all sides by the Horseshoe Falls. And we kept getting closer and closer. Your attention gets divided between the Falls and worrying that we're going right under the cascade and are about to be swamped. The force of the water hitting the river below (the Horseshoe Falls have a huge trench in front of them that is almost as deep as the Falls themselves are tall, as opposed to the rock-strewn base of the American Falls) is so immense that the line of impact is always obscured by dense white mist and being surrounded on all sides you become convinced that you're only yards away from getting sucked down into that 180 foot trench. It's really one of the few things I've seen that can compete with a widescreen movie and Dolby Sound for sheer spectacle. The sound of the roar of the water right there in the "bowl" is absolutely deafening. Finally the boat begins a long slow turn back towards Terrapin point and from there back out onto the river out of range of the spume. The look on the faces of all the drenched passengers who are invariably completely mute—coincidentally just when they're able to hear properly again—most of the way back is part of the value for the money.

I exited the boat with Josh who was gratifyingly enthusiastic about the whole thing. I certainly envied him that this had been his first time. I've lost track of how many times I've been on the *Maid of the Mist*. They run the boats from both sides of the river, some of them flying Canadian flags and some of them American flags.

Since the Maid of the Mist landing is within easy walking distance of the Horseshoe Falls, I had told the driver to find a safe parking spot and we'd call him when we were ready to head back. We joined the bustling crowds of early evening sightseers strolling towards the observation area at the brink of the Falls. The subject of Josh's own aspirations to become a comic-book illustrator came up as he and his mother walked ahead of us. I had already given him a copy of the *Guide to Self-Publishing* when we had climbed aboard the car at Pearson Airport.

"Josh did what they call a 24-Hour Comic..."

"I did one of those."

"You did one of those?"

"Yeah, I did mine in sixteen hours. I was a real Neal Adams about it."

"Well, Marilyn and I went down to the store where he was working on

A famous scene from Green Lantern 76 (April 1970), emotionally riveting if short on logic (one letter writer at the time suggested that GL should have responded, "Well, I've saved the Earth a few times").

it and we brought Kentucky Fried Chicken for everybody along about the three o'clock, four o'clock in the morning when they were running out of gas."

A mental image of Kentucky Fried Chicken in a comic-book store and next to artwork. Neal, of course, was way ahead of me. "We brought plenty of napkins so they wouldn't get any grease on their work. Josh is a very special kid," he was every inch the proud father discussing him. "At 18 years old he whaled through that story and he did surprisingly good things with it. He's slightly different than my other son, Jason, in that he seeks out my opinion, and because he seeks it out he gets it. I must take it a little bit easier on him, I don't know. Well, I probably did, but I don't think he was...unworthy...of the kindness because he really busted his ass and he really had good ideas, he was able to do it within the 24-hour time frame.

"We've talked about it since then.

"The good thing about when your kids do the stuff is that you get to spend more time commenting on it. When you're at a convention and you're talking to these young artists the problem is that you can only give them a certain amount of time. And within that time constraint you try to give them as much valuable information as you can. I try not to give them too much criticism—you know 'it's bad, but this is what you can do to make it better.' But with Josh, the thing is that he's there. He lives with me. Tomorrow we can talk about the same job and discuss it in more detail so the process isn't quite so tough because I don't have to be quite so rough on him because of the time constraint.

"But I have to admit at a convention if a guy is bringing artwork up to show me and he's too old to be starting out and the work isn't very good, knowing what's coming, Josh heads for cover," Neal laughed.

"He'll come to me at the end of a day, and he'll say, 'Dad, this was the best day of my life so far.' And he'll do that a lot," he laughed again. "Which I find terribly impressive."

As we walked up to the Table Rock observation area, I pointed to the *Maid of the Mist* making its slow turn before the Horseshoe Falls literally hundreds of yards from the base of the Falls. On the boat, you think you're about to get inundated but from the observation area, you think, "Boy, they don't get very close to the Falls, at all."

As we arrived at Table Rock I mentioned something about Gerhard doing a lot of the nuts-and-bolts of the business side of Aardvark-Vanaheim in addition to the backgrounds on the book.

"So you *do* trust someone," Neal said, triumphantly. Someone just coming abreast of us stumbled and almost fell headlong.

"Now look what you made him do," I chided, sarcastically. I explained that it wasn't really a matter of *trusting* Gerhard in my view. It was more that we both had so much of our professional lives jointly tied up in *Cerebus*—twenty-eight years in my case, twenty years in Gerhard's case—that we had a joint vested interest in the intellectual property. In looking out for my own vested interest, I looked out for Gerhard's and vice versa. Neal, I could see, was unconvinced. It was fascinating, though, that he had retained that piece of information—Dave Sim doesn't trust anyone—and was able to attack what he saw as an inconsistency the moment it presented itself.

Another plate from the late-seventies Adams portfolio

At the Brink of the Horseshoe Falls

Marilyn and I ended up standing at the precipice—the most popular viewing location at Table Rock, you have edge in over a period of minutes—watching the wave tips on the water making their slow and curvaceous final turn just at the threshold of the dizzying plunge. Those wave tips, catching the light, are a peculiar pale greenish-turquoise colour and because of the arch as it curves over the edge,

the wave tips are almost completely transparent and so are faintly tinted a pale, pale green. I have spent literally hours looking at those wave tips and thinking, I know that colour. Where do I know that colour from?

"Gee," said Marilyn. "That pale green colour. It looks like the bottom of the vintage Coke bottles."

That was it. That was what it had been reminding me of all these years. What a relief to never again have to ask myself that question. I asked her about her work at Continuity. Was it primarily on the film end of things? "Primarily at Continuity I'll 'rep' or produce commercials with advertising clients and I also 'rep' illustration. If someone needs a picture of Batman for an ad. Neal's drawing a cougar in a comic-book style right now for a company that makes paper.

"When things slow down I have to go out and get the jobs," she laughs. "I prefer it when they come to us. It's all pretty much in the agent/producer end of things. One way or another you're 'fronting'."

How long had she worked at Continuity?

"Twenty years."

And she and Neal had been together?

"Twenty-eight years. Actually..." she did the mental math, 'twenty-nine years."

So it took eight years...

"For me to come over?" she smiled at the memory. "Yeah. Because I was in advertising, I was an art director before that. I was a *client,*" she emphasized, adding the subtle nuance of a sneer to the word. Then added in a conspiratorial whisper. "An *evil client.*" She smiles again at the memory. "I drove him crazy."

I laughed. Did you?

"Yeah."

How did you drive him crazy?

"Oh, I guess by...being indecisive," this provoked a genuine wicked little girl laugh. "He hates making changes, you know. So, I'd ask for changes. It was a good way to drive him crazy."

Well, it seemed to be a good way to get his attention, anyway.

Again, the wicked little girl laugh.

"I also manage the office in a lot of different ways, getting food for clients, ordering furniture. Some days it's like being a stewardess and some days it's like being an office manager."

And every day's different.

"Every day's different. One day you can be working on designs for an amusement park ride and the next day working on a comic book based on some video game. It's all different."

We all stood hypnotized by the vista, doing what you do in that situation which is changing your vantage point. What does it look like just before the precipice, what does it look like just after the precipice? Taking in that long arc of furiously cascading water—the equivalent, it has been said, of 500,000 bathtubs emptying every second—the ubiquitous rainbow which leaps into vivid life whenever the sunlight strikes the billows of mist rising from the Falls base. Allowing your gaze to retreat from the brink, skipping over the patches of white water, further and further back on the river; all that water being borne relentlessly forward. Watching a leaf or a branch come skimming from the middle distance bouncing through the white water and then in one final pale green curl, disappearing over the edge. Plunging 180 feet and (who knows?) perhaps plunging a further 180 feet into that underwater trench. I always end up envying the gulls which swoop over and around the cataract, allowing the breeze generated by the Falls to hurl them aloft and then arcing and beating their wings, hurtling through the spray, skimming over the very brink. There's a rock white with bird droppings a little past Terrapin Point where the gulls hang out presumably before deciding "Man, I've gotta do that again."

It began to rain.

It is always difficult in Niagara Falls to tell if that's the case or if the wind has just shifted and that you are now being buffeted by the redirected spray from the Falls, but in this case you could see by the reaction of the people in the vicinity that it had, indeed, begun to rain. Neal yawned. "I could do with a coffee along about now." We adjourned to the building housing the Table Rock restaurant, passing on the left on the way in, the Fudge Co. which has been there for as long as I've been going to Niagara Falls.

'Best fudge in the world," I said, and Neal slipped Josh a ten-dollar bill and told him to get us some fudge as he departed in search of his coffee.

Josh Adams art from Twisted Perception

Journey Behind the Falls was the last attraction. It was hard to believe as we stood in the middle of the concourse, cutting off pieces of fudge with the little white plastic knife that the day was coming to an end. Of course, I've never been able to believe than any day at Niagara Falls was coming to an end.

I had a chance to actually talk with Josh at that point as the quest for coffee evidently became even more complicated.

"I'm doing a project now with a professional wrestler, Rob Van Dam, and he hired me to finish off a series that he wrote, so I'm doing two issues for him. Hopefully I'll be done with that by the summer and it's going to be solicited soon. The book is called *Twisted Perceptions*."

Your Dad and I were talking a little bit just when we were walking up to the Horseshoe Falls about your Dad critiquing your work.

"My Dad has been a tough—but loving—critic. But he has a reputation for being a tough critic in all situations. I know he's been a tough critic with me only because I know he wants me to succeed. And I always pay a lot of respect to what it is that he tells me."

Can you give me any examples off the top of your head of things that he's said that really "moved you along"?

"I don't know about 'moved me along,' but lately for example I was doing a Batman page for practice. I took a Batman page from a comic book, and I decided to do new layouts for it. I started drawing the piece, and I showed it to him in passing, and he told me 'You should get some people, some friends to model for these poses.' And I listened to him, since I'm always trying to stay open-minded about what he's saying. And comparing the two—from the sketches I had done without models to what it came out to be using models—it blew my mind. I really didn't expect it to be such a great improvement, and I've gotten such an increase in understanding from it. Faces are different from person to person. And even though every person on the page is a super-hero, they still look different. In terms of specific examples? There's so much I've gotten from him that I can't really think of one off the top of my head."

How often does Dad look at your work?

"Well, my desk is right next to his, so every time he gets up, he's able to look over my shoulder. But he tends to leave it open for me to decide to come to him if I want to ask a question. Unless I've been quiet for too long. And then he'll kind of lean in and say 'Are you *sure* that's how the face looks?' And he'll let me think about it before I realize that maybe I did something wrong, I should look it over again."

Dave Sim: "You know the thing that most excites my own creative energy if I'm doing something that requires a Neal Adams style?" The half-completed unused cover to Green Lantern/Green Arrow 76.

Do you try *not* to go to him? Do you try to do as much as you can on your own?

"I have tried to do that. Sometimes—if it's work that I have to get done?—like this comic project sometimes I won't go directly to him because I'll realize that there's a learning process involved that, at this point, I might not have time for. But, being the age I am now and not being as young as I was I realize it's usually a good idea to go to him because he knows a *lot* more than I do. It's going to be a good many years before that ever changes, if it ever changes. So, I'm always going to him for help nowadays."

Do you think this is what you might want to do for a living?

"I don't know. There are so many things out there, but I do know that I want to give it my best shot. And I know that I want to be doing this for at least a little while. But it's hard to say what's going to happen in ten years, what's going to happen in

Top: splash page for X-Men *59 (inks by Tom Palmer). Bottom: Adams's original cover for* X-Men *56 (from 1969).*

twenty years. A few years back I wanted to be an athlete and I was on a wrestling team and I was lifting weights and running a lot. I don't work out nearly as much as I used to." He gestured towards the fudge and smiled ruefully. "This tastes really good, but this is a really bad idea.

"Now that I'm in college, I'm focusing a lot more on art. It's hard to say. But I can guarantee that you will see me in comic books for a while."

Journey Behind the Falls

It was while we were waiting in line for Journey Behind the Falls that I was seized by another fanboy convulsion.

"You know the thing that most excites my own creative energy if I'm doing something that requires a Neal Adams style? Of all the things you've done it was the half-completed, rejected cover to *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* 76 that Sal Quartuccio ran in *The Art of Neal Adams* volume one."

"What was that? The half-completed…oh, the cover that *didn't* get printed?" He was having trouble placing it. How could he *not* remember that cover?

"It was half-inked, all pencilled, Green Lantern in the foreground and Green Arrow in the background…"

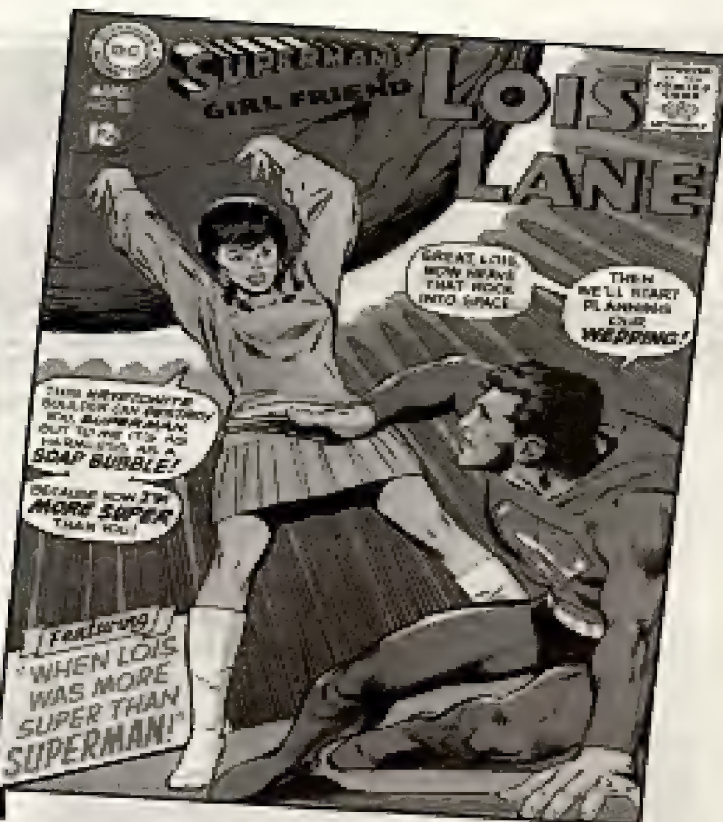
"Yeah, I didn't like it."

My internal axis went out of whack for the umpty-umpth time that day. In my fanboy world the only reason that cover wasn't used was because of arbitrary editorial fiat.

"*You* didn't like it?"

"No, I liked the one we ended up using better. I was trying to do an iconic cover. I wanted to do something that I thought represented—not so much Green Arrow, but Green Lantern as a character. And, I don't know. I didn't think I had accomplished that with that first attempt. There's a whole bunch of covers that they printed in the magazines over the years '*rejected* cover by Neal Adams, never used' as if somebody had come up to me and said 'That's not a very good cover, you oughtn't to use it, and you should do it over.' I can't even think of one that was rejected in that way." He laughed at what must have been my gob-smacked expression. "It was *me* rejecting them."

I was still trying to wrap my mind around the concept. "You would just get partway through the cover and think to yourself, 'I don't like the way this is turning out' and...."

"Yeah, I don't know. 'That's just not very good,' is what I'd think to myself. And I'd start over. The only place that I got covers *rejected* was at Marvel, actually. Like the first *X-Men* cover that I did, I had this Egyptian character holding the *X-Men* logo over his head as if to smash it to the ground, and the X-Men were tied to the logo. And Stan [Lee] brought it back to me and said that Martin Goodman had rejected it because he felt that the characters obscured the logo and that therefore people wouldn't be able to read it. My jaw dropped open. I couldn't imagine how anyone could say such a thing. The characters were actually forming the letters of the word "X-Men," one of the shortest titles in comics, *reinforcing* the logo. I thought it was one of the dumbest comments I had ever heard."

Adams's Lois Lane covers may not be among his best (pictured above are two from 1968)—but they're still better than 95% of covers done by everyone else.

The line was moving again after having stalled for several minutes.

"Well," I said, remembering the Sol Harrison stories, "It would be in contention, anyway."

Neal laughed. "So, I did another cover that did get printed. The upshot of which was that several issues later, Stan came to me and said, 'I really hate to ask you this, but why do you do better covers for DC than you do for us?' And I didn't want to say, 'Because you rejected that first cover, Stan' because I didn't think that was true. But I suspect that I might've gotten paranoid as a result that they were going to reject my covers, so I would go with very safe instead of experimental covers. But, I really think that was just bulls--t. I think I did just as good covers for Marvel as I did for DC and, for whatever reason, they never came out quite as good as the ones for DC."

What I was thinking but didn't say, as the line bogged down again, was that at the time Neal Adams had been so far beyond the abilities of anyone else working in the field that only he would see a flaw in something like the original *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* cover and it was a testament to his own standards that he did so. The Martin Goodman critique struck me as just another example of trying to make the Neal Adams square peg fit the round hole of traditional comic-book publishing theory. "Thou shalt not obscure my logo." This assessment of mine crashed head-on with Neal's own last word on the subject:

"And, you know, we tend to forget that I did a lot of crappy covers for DC, as well. A lot of those *Lois Lane* covers were some of the crappiest covers I ever saw. I think it was a kind of brain death that sets in when you do a lot of covers as I was doing at that time, particularly if it's someone else's layout and you have a lot of cover copy that you have to work around. It isn't art, it's purely functional. 'Oy. I don't need to do this.'"

"I did notice that you redid almost all of the *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* covers if the selection printed in *Comic Book Artist* is anything to go by."

"I did it often. I guess it was because I liked the book, I thought it was a very special and important book, and I felt the book needed every break and needed the best cover I was capable of doing. A lot of times I would end up not respecting my own layout. I'd be in the middle of finishing it, and I'd lean back and go, 'You know, I really want people to read this comic book. I think it deserves a better cover.'"

Adams: "A lot of times I would end up not respecting my own layout. I'd be in the middle of finishing it...and go, "You know,...I think it deserves a better cover.""

Mentally picturing the rejected covers and the finished covers, I could see that the finished covers usually had a similar but stronger initial design. It's one of the built-in hardships of drawing comic books. When you finish something you have a much

The final Ben Casey *strip from July 30, 1966*

better idea of how to do it properly when you're done than when you started it. "Most of us, when that happens, we just leave it and say, I'll try harder next time."

"Yeah, I saw that happening with my work, too, and I decided that wasn't a good idea to take that attitude. It was a good idea to fix what I did."

And suddenly we were at the front of the line.

My own last word is that if anyone is reading this who has a Neal Adams *Lois Lane* cover in his collection and he suddenly decides, "This is one of the crappiest covers I ever saw. This isn't art, this is purely functional. There's too much copy on here," please feel free to wrap it up and send it to me. Having no standards whatever, I promise to give it a good home.

Neal sipped at the large coffee he had had to go some ways to find, and as we followed the arrows there was a large sign reading "No Food or Drink Allowed." I pointed it out to Neal. He just smiled and kept walking.

The Journey Behind the Falls resembles the Cave of the Winds in many particulars and differs in others. One in which they differ is in the number of celebrity photos on display on the Canadian side that are nowhere in evidence on the American side. But, then Canadians have always been more "starstruck" than Americans. It isn't just that we have the Horseshoe Falls, it's the fact that famous people have come to see them. There are, as an example, a number of photos of Princess Diana and Princes William and Harry on display as you descend the stairways, artefacts of a time when it seemed that Princess Diana would always be the marquee name she had been on that visit back in the early 1990s.

As to similarity, there is the same descent in the same cramped elevator, the same poured concrete tunnels with damp walls with the same wire-caged electric lights. And then a branch tunnel appears on the right. More celebrity photos including one of Senator John Kennedy adjacent to one of Marilyn Monroe—both photos old enough that it could have been an entirely inadvertent juxtaposition. As we follow along, another tunnel branches off to the left. And at the end of that tunnel on the other side of a small barricade filling the tunnel aperture is the Falls itself, furiously shifting and pounding the mouth of the tunnel which is permanently drenched from the spray. Further along and another tunnel likewise ends behind the Falls, cascades of water pounding the cement floor and dripping from the tunnel ceiling.

We travel back to rejoin the primary tunnel and continue along it until it empties into a small cabin-like structure dominated by two staircases. Descending the staircase you arrive on a wide platform at the Base of the Horseshoe Falls, staring up at it, across an expanse of permanently damp moss-covered ground strewn with fragments of fallen shale. This was the latest in the day that I had been here and I noted that the illumination from Journey Behind the Falls tunnel aperture was visible behind the curtain of water. I had always pictured that the tunnel was dozens of yards further along. No redwood catwalk was possible here, it would be swept away in an eyeblink by the fury of the waters. I look around for Neal to see if he'll have any comment. He was here just a minute ago. The mass of tourists are all packed in at the Base of the Falls, getting as close to this Natural Wonder of the World as is humanly possible. Turning around, out of the corner of my eye, there is a single blue poncho on the *rearmost side* of the observation platform.

Neal, of course.

He is blithely disinterested in the cascading water and instead he has his own front row seat for his closest look yet at the 180 feet of sedimentary rock that makes up the wall of the Niagara Gorge. Noticing my arrival, he happily points out a few of the more interesting anomalies where a darker layer has superseded a lighter layer and vice versa.

Marilyn had called the driver on her cellphone and we stood waiting by the side of the Niagara Parkway for him. A fine misting rain was falling steadily now, fogging my glasses. Neal takes the opportunity to point out a number of advantages that contact lenses (Neal has contact lenses) hold over eyeglasses. And then the driver is there and we're all piling aboard. Neal is the last one in, taking his command seat for the last time. He attempts to pull the door shut but the additional weight of the four of us has pressed the bottom of the door tight against the sidewalk.

Having been in that situation on several occasions, I know that the only thing you can do is for everyone to get back out and for the driver to pull

forward (or back) until the door is completely over the roadway. It's really elementary physics that indicates that it's impossible to counterbalance the weight of four full-grown adults pressing down a car door with the entirety of the weight of the car as the fulcrum.

I'm momentarily torn between which makes more sense: telling Neal or telling the driver. Since Neal is pulling on the door with all of his strength, I figure I better tell him before he dislocates his shoulder or something.

"Um, actually, Neal..."

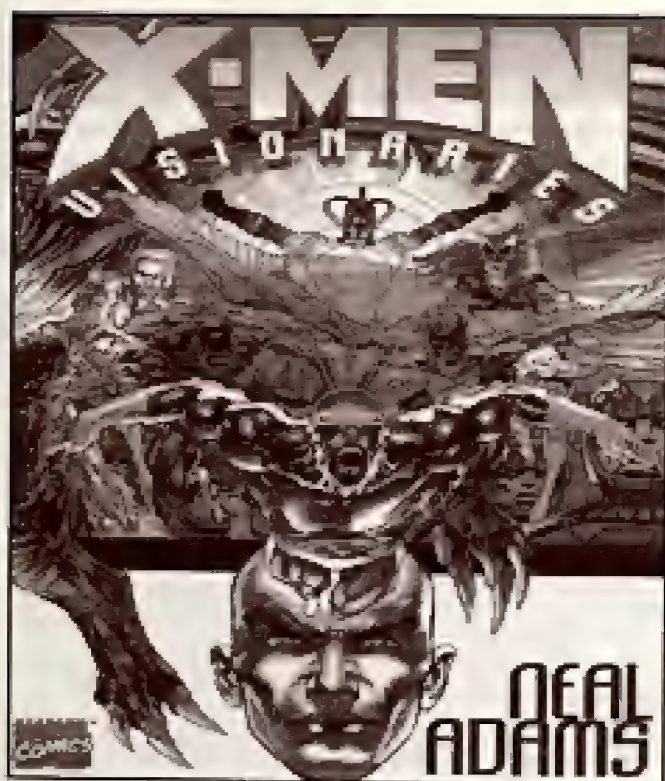
Suddenly, with a wrenching shriek of metal on pavement, the door lurches inwards a few inches. And with another wrenching shriek of metal on pavement it lurches inwards another few inches. And then with another wrenching shriek of metal it slams shut.

"There," Neal said. "That's got it."

That Chelsea Piers must be quite a gym, I thought.

Toronto Bound

The sun was well down as we glided out of

Another plate from the late-seventies Adams portfolio

town (Marilyn Adams counting the number of Starbucks—three—in a four-block distance: still smarting from my whistle-blowing about the Canadian charge of American over-commercialization. You sure don't seen any Starbucks within shouting distance of the *American* Falls) and once we hit the Queen Elizabeth Way, the passenger compartment was dark except for the bar lights. Spectral lights of the passing traffic illuminated Neal Adams' features briefly and intermittently, like, well yes, like something out of a Neal Adams comic book, as he told me the story of the mystery phone call from Kris.

Neal Adams, Batman Author

Adams: It began when I would go to Europe and people would bring up hardcover books and softcover books for me to sign that would be, like, *Neal Adams' Conan.*

Neal Adams' Conan?

I didn't *do* that much *Conan.*

"That may be true but they collected it in a book."

Or they would bring me *Neal Adams' Batman* or *Neal Adams' X-Men.* There's an English publisher, as an example, that printed my *X-Men* stories as a series of hardcover volumes, the same sort of format that they use for children's books here in North America. It was the company that started the comic-store chain, Forbidden Planet—they started printing those books. And when I first heard about them, they were not supposed to be distributed in the United States because that was the limitation that DC Comics had put on the license. But, then, what happened was that North American stores started to order them from Forbidden Planet, and it became irresistible from a business standpoint—if someone orders a hundred copies—not to service that demand. And since Forbidden Planet had stores in the United States it was almost silly *not* to sell them. I'm not saying they did sell them, but you can see how it became kind of a fuzzy issue. And after a while some stores did sell them.

And it seemed that the North American publishers, DC and Marvel, for a time never took the hint. "We have a certain number of premiere creators of whom people would like to see collections of their work." But that intruded upon problem areas from their standpoint. What is it that the communists called it? "A cult of personality." So what they would do at Marvel or at DC is that they would do a collection that was, like, *The Joker of the 70s.* And of course my fans would go ahead and buy those books for the two or three stories of mine that would be in there. That doesn't mean that people weren't buying them for the other stories, but you could always get that sales "bump" by having a Neal Adams story in there. And of course that meant the companies wouldn't have to admit that that's why they were including my work and still get the benefit of the market value. And they could list my name first as one of the contributors because it starts with "A" and so on.

Then DC started reprinting books that had done well, like *Green Lantern/Green Arrow.* Of course you can't say that that's Neal Adams, that's Neal Adams and Denny O'Neil. So it wasn't an homage to Neal Adams, it was a Blue Ribbon Book or what-

ever they called it, and it was an homage to Neal Adams, Denny O'Neil, and the series. So, for *years* they were doing this sort of thing. And, coincidentally, if you're a fan you notice [laughs] that Neal Adams' stuff gets reprinted an awful lot.

So, you know, I kind of let it go. Every once in a while I'd mention it casually, "Gee, you guys are reprinting my stuff an awful lot." And, of course the cover prices when they did kept on going up [laughs]. So what would happen was, no matter how much DC would do that, everyone in European countries outside the United States would do it even more. So I'd be at a convention in Europe and people would be handing me these Neal Adams books. "Oh, a Neal Adams book," I'd say, flipping through it, "Isn't that interesting?"

Now, I was making royalties on them but, even though I had had a hand in establishing the royalties system, the royalties had always been *small* and the royalties had always been *unfair*. The combined royalty of the penciller and the inker was equal to the royalty of the writer, as an example. Now, in my book, the penciller is like the director. If you say that the penciller and the writer deserve an equal royalty, I would say "That's reasonable." If the inker gets an additional royalty, well, he provided a service, and you can argue that he shouldn't get a royalty at all, and if you are going to give him a royalty, you're not going to mix his royalty in with the penciller's royalty. The penciller is the creator of the thing, the inker is providing a service.

That's not Neal Adams saying that inking is a "lesser thing" or a "less important thing": all of the skills involved in creating a comic book are important. But from a *creator* point of view, the *creators* are the writer and the penciller. The other people assist. Sort of like the director and the writer on a film. That's the same sort of thing. You can acknowledge the actors, you can acknowledge the art direction, but essentially the primary beneficiaries should be the director and the writer on a film and the penciller and the writer on a comic book. You can have a separate royalty for the inker, but if the inker gets a royalty, then it's hard to rationalize why the colourist wouldn't get a royalty as well. But that's another discussion for another time.

The penciller has his royalty lumped in with the inker, so the writer gets the larger percentage. It doesn't make any sense to me from the point of view of the amount of work. But even looking at it from the perspective of *creativity* — if the penciller and the writer collaborated *equally* to produce this piece of work — logically they should each receive the same percentage in royalties. But they don't and that's an inequity that hopefully will one day go away. But it exists.

So for me to share the art royalty with Dick Giordano or Tom Palmer is a terrible thing, to me, because it cuts down on my fair share of the royalties. Particularly if the point of the book is that it's Neal Adams' work, and yet I'm sharing my royalty with the inker, and the writer is getting paid more than I am, there comes a point where you have to say, "Look, *why is it* that you're reprinting this book?" Are you reprinting it because of the *writer*? Because that particular writer—pick your writer—has done many, many, many books. I have only done a certain number of books because it's less time-consuming

to write than it is to draw. So I keep coming back to the fundamental point: "You seem to be reprinting my books an awful lot."

Let's talk about the *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* book first. All of the *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* stories I did were written by Denny O'Neil, but on the cover they're going to write *Neal Adams' Green Lantern/Green Arrow* and they're not going to write Denny O"Neil. Because they have learned from the Europeans that people will buy a particular book if you're promoting it for this specific aspect of the book. Now, they sold that book for $75. I casually called them and I said, You know, guys, you're using my name at the top of the book and I am not *at this point* saying "Don't use my name at the top of the book." It's very nice that you're using my name, that I'm getting prominent credit for the work, but you *are* using my name to sell the book. Whatever you may say to people, you're putting my name on the book in order to sell the book. I feel that either my name should not be there or there should be a royalty consideration for the use of my name because DC Comics—to whatever extent DC may have, as a corporate entity, created *Green Lantern/Green Arrow*—you did not create Neal Adams. [laughs] My mother and my father created Neal Adams.

Well, that was a conversation. And, of course, nobody said to my face, "Denny O"Neil deserves the same credit that you deserve" because they aren't doing any other Denny O"Neil collections at the moment.

Then they did *Deadman*.

Well, *Deadman's* a slightly different story. I wrote probably more than half of those stories. No two people wrote more than two stories apart from me. Well, if you're going to "do" *Deadman* as a character, if the point of the collection is this great character called Deadman, there should be Garcia Lopez's mini-series along with my stories in the book. But they're not doing that, they're only doing *my Deadman*, a minimum of 50% of which I wrote. And they're putting my name on the book. So then the question becomes a little bit more…pointed.

Remember I'm not interested in getting into a hassle with DC Comics, I have no reason to be upset with them. It's just that they're not thinking ahead. Which is kind of a habit up there, but…there you go.

At that point they were talking about collecting my *Batman* stuff into books. So, I got ahold of Paul [*Levitz, DC publisher*] and a lawyer up there—they brought a lawyer in—and I said, "Realistically, guys, there comes a point where it's 'sort of' and then there comes a point where it's 'really kind of' and then there comes a point where it's clear to everybody. You're reprinting Neal Adams' work [laughs]—whatever you have—in book form." Whatever you can put your hands on. You've made a lot of money reprinting my stuff in the past where you've reprinted one of my stories with other stories, then two stories with other stories, then three stories with other stories, and now you're collecting it all in one book all by itself with no one else's stories and you're putting my name at the top of the front cover. There has to come a point where you need to say, "We have to pay for the name." Because there isn't a writer involved—I happen to be the writer as well for the most part—and it isn't really about the character, because if it was you would be doing a hardcover book of Garcia Lopez's *Deadman*, and you're not doing that. Everybody knows what it is that you're doing. Shall we pretend that DC Comics is the only one who doesn't know what is going on here? If I have a conversation with people, they say, "Oh, they're reprinting your *Deadman*." We have to make some kind of an arrangement to create a royalty that kicks in when you use the name of the creator like that.

Well, that was the beginning of what you would call a negotiation.

Sim: *There was a point in the negotiation where Paul Levitz actually took your side against the lawyers, wasn't there?*

Adams: The thing is Paul's a very reasonable man and it's not that he was going against the lawyers. I had written a series of percentages that were fairly large percentages and the lawyers were saying "So, what you're proposing is that we replace your

A friendly Adams at the Chicagocon in 1993

current percentages with these new percentages." And Paul jumped in and said, "No, these are *additional* percentages, we add them on top." He was saying exactly the right thing, but the lawyer blanched [laughs] trying to stop him and calm him down. It was clear to Paul what we were talking about—it wasn't a royalty for pencilling the book, it was a royalty for using my name. Paul was right, but lawyers being lawyers they figured it was worth a shot to see if they could just replace my penciller royalty with the "name value" royalty. Paul, having been a freelancer himself and having a good sense of what's right and what's wrong was there right away, "No, this is a separate royalty for using his name." And as a matter of fact, I said, "Actually, Paul, these numbers are a little high, why don't we take them down a little bit." So we pulled the numbers down a little bit.

Sim: *But it was still miles beyond anything DC had ever done.*

Adams: You mean, it was reasonable [laughs]

Sim: *[laughing] Like they do in the real world.*

Adams: Things are starting to happen in comic books the way they happen in the real world. And it's not because it's fair, it's because creators are gaining the "clout". If you're Stephen King and you don't get a good deal from one publisher all you do is [laughs] tell another publisher you're not happy.

Beautiful opening page to "A View From Without" from Phase 1 *(1970)*

At the end of the negotiation, which took two years…and which was done casually: negotiating with DC wasn't *all* that I did through those two years by any means…we arrived at a royalty whereby I would get a larger royalty than the writer would get unless they collected the writer's work as well in which case they would make a separate agreement with him. So I, as the artist who has his name credit attached to the property—*Neal Adams' Batman*—get a larger percentage than what someone else might get who doesn't have his name credit attached to the property. We're starting to get this level of clout because, one, yes, we can sell more copies but two, more significantly, what we do can be made into movies. So the companies, yeah, they can't give you the whole house but they certainly have an area of flexibility where they can afford to go that extra mile and it's still a good deal for them.

That was what the phone call from Kris was about. We had just gotten the first check in on the new deal.

Sim: *The events are pushing them in the right direction. And of course, they've got the one happy story of Neal Adams getting his name put on his work and the unhappy story of Alan Moore wanting his name taken off his work.*

Adams: Yeah, and I'm sorry that he feels that way. I think it's unfortunate for Alan and I think it's also unfortunate for a lot of the other creators because it creates a foggier picture where you create an alternative possibility that can be very destructive for someone who is not in Alan's position. And I would hope that somewhere along the line something a little more amicable could be worked out between the parties. Something a little more along the lines of what happens with Stephen King. Alan in many ways is in the same position of prominence that Stephen King is. He's in the position of having a lot of clout and he can establish a future project and affect his past projects by the future project. He can say, "I will do *this* for you, but I want *that* contract changed that I had before." And when you're in that position, you not only have responsibility for yourself—and I realize this might go against Alan's grain, so I'm not saying this in any way in the form of advice—I think that we're all part of a society and we all make a contribution to everybody else by our actions, we influence other people whether we intend to or not. And sometimes the influence generated by somebody who is able to make a good deal can be negative unless it's clari-

fied. I like to see good business between people because it benefits everybody. Difficulty, great difficulty like this complicates things and makes it difficult for people to know what direction they might want to go in. All I'm saying is "People can help make things better. And people can make things worse."

Sim: [where angels fear to tread] *I think one of the problems that Alan is looking at is the possible effect that the movie adaptations of his work might have had on the perception of him as a creator. He was very philosophical about the fact that the comic book is a comic book and the movie is the movie, but there is a certain amount of damage done when* League of Extraordinary Gentlemen *which is a highly regarded top-of-the-line graphic novel gets made into a second-rate would-be blockbuster film. The film adaptations of his work rank a good deal lower in the public mind than his comic-book work does in the minds of his comic-book public.*

At this point the tape came to an end and I didn't flip it over right away which, I'll admit, was something of an unconscious editorial comment on my part. We had been discussing something that to me was important and it had led over to Hollywood and my own assessment of what Alan might be so unhappy about with DC. He wants to own his work again and he's just not going to be able to do that. You face the unhappy news as a man. But things like the Whatchamacallit Brothers, the V for Vendetta *filmmakers lying and saying in a press release that Alan loved the script is just major league salt in that wound. Unfortunately I was trying to discuss this with Neal who is a) a major film enthusiast, b) someone the majority of whose career in comics had consisted of working on properties that other people had created and c) that he had not had the experience of losing any significant creative property to the companies. He had done 95% of the work on Deadman, yes, but he hadn't* created *Deadman so he could be philosophical about the extent of his own participation that was very much along the lines of how you had to see these things if you worked in commercial art. The work belongs to the client so don't fall in love with it. Even the negotiation he had just gone through with DC he had obviously conducted in a realistic, eyes-open fashion. Legally, they didn't need to pay him anything more than the voluntary royalty they were already paying him which was why his go-slow "casual conversation approach" was the way to go.*

I cited as an example Dave Stevens' The Rocketeer *as being what I saw as a typical example of how the comic book/Hollywood connection works. Yes, you get a big payday as the film is developed and then made and then distributed and a certain amount of popularity and small fame around the release, but then the intellectual property is pretty much dead. Likewise* Howard the Duck *which was such a dud of a movie that it single-handedly sank the market value of the intellectual property.*

I really hate even discussing Hollywood, but my journalist self overcame my intellectual- property purist self and turned the tape recorder back on at that point.

Adams: Ah, *The Rocketeer* movie. That was a Disney studio film so you have to expect a certain Disney studio quality to it. And that was done by Dave Stevens with open eyes as I understand it. The thing that you have to kind of remember is that we don't live in a perfect world. Actually we die [laughs]. And on our way to the end of that little journey it's kind of interesting to see things happen. If people are going to feel bad about any little thing that goes wrong or where it doesn't go their way, I don't think it's a good idea to make deals. If you can take "the yin and the yang" and kind of balance between them and tell good stories and relax through the bad stuff—bad stuff happens to everybody—you can still have very positive results. Stephen King's a good writer. Not everyone thinks he's the greatest writer in the world. I think he's a great writer, but I freely admit that I don't think all of his movies are the greatest movies in the world, even stuff that he's directed himself hasn't turned out as well as I might have expected it to. It's like grass waving in the wind, it doesn't always go one way. I think that Alan's stuff—he may think that it's being treated badly, but it's being treated by a community who make good movies and who make bad movies. I think *V for Vendetta* is a very good movie, it got into the hands of good people and they made a good movie out of it. I personally liked *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. Some of the special effects weren't there but, God, Sean Connery was in it. It was a really great effort, a lot of money was spent. It seemed "awfully swell" to me. I'd be glad if something of mine got made into a movie like that, even if it didn't do as well financially as everyone involved with it hoped that it would. It's like with the Superman franchise. People say that they made one bad movie and that was it, the franchise is dead and it will never get another shot. It's not true. It's as "not true" as the rain coming down is true. There's always an opportunity in the future that often comes from a bad project where someone sees the bad project and says, "Gee we ought to do another one and do it right this time." They're going to do another version of *He-Man*. There was a *He-Man* movie made. Now I would say, you should never have made a *He-man* movie. The sooner that thing goes away the better. Essentially he was a copy of Conan—out of time, out of place. And essentially the company that owned the character did the toys, gave up the license and started a new He-man. And the funny thing about that He-man movie was that it wasn't a bad movie and if you rent it you'll be surprised at how good it is. And now they're talking about doing another He-man movie. Well there's a license that should have died a-borning but it got made and it reproduced itself.

Sim: *In my view the whole thing is such a crap shoot. I mean, I only have the one property. In Alan's case he's got maybe a half-dozen properties where everything is riding on what this does for the intellectual property itself. You were standing on the other side of the equation in that you were working on other people's intellectual properties. You've managed to build something up on the other side of the equation, particularly with this author's royalty at DC...*

Adams: Well, you have to remember that I'm also a creator of stuff. I did a whole line of comic books that I discontinued but I still own the intellectual properties they were based on. And people are using other properties that I did using the creative end. You can say, "Well, you're not really involved in the creation of, say, Batman." But if they use, say, Man-Bat in a movie, well, yes I am. And if anyone does *Armor* or does *Megalith* or does any of those characters that I did, yeah, I have a total vested interest. But...I'd kind of like to see s—t done before I die.

Sim: *But it is a little different. You did six issues of Armor and seventeen issues of Megalith ten years ago. You're not really betting all your chips on that.*

Adams: But I don't think that you do. I think that's the whole point. I think if there was a *Cerebus the Aardvark* movie that isn't going to stop the publication of the books. Your potential audience will either say "Wow that's cool" or they'll say "That's not what I expected" and they'll go on buying the books. Nothing seems to stop other things, if you have someone committed to advancing their thing. So I don't really see the downside of doing these kinds of things. I've been around long enough and seen enough that I just think of it as history and I see nothing being hurt by failures and in fact interesting failures most of the time seem to advance the property. So I just don't see it the way other folks do. And you know I like to see experimentation, I like to see people try things. If someone doesn't want to try something then I say, "Okay, fine you don't want to try it." I'd rather see a good attempt and a failure than no attempt at all.

Sim: *But, you're also a major movie fan. I can go eight months or a year quite comfortably without seeing a movie so the idea of a* Cerebus *movie just doesn't excite any kind of interest. As an example I haven't seen any of the films that were made out of Alan Moore's books. It just didn't interest me.*

Adams: Go see *V for Vendetta*. Do yourself a favor.

Sim: *I might just do that.* [laughs] *Getting back to the interview per se the first person you phoned when you had this deal with DC was Joe Kubert...*

Adams: Sure. He sort of laughed, he chuckled. Because anytime I do stuff like this Joe gets a big kick out of it. It's like watching some outlander crash the city walls. And I did suggest to him that if they ever do books using Joe Kubert's name—*Joe Kubert's Sgt. Rock* or whatever—that it's time for him to be thinking about a contract that gives him a slightly better deal. Whether he does it or not is his

Another plate from the late-seventies Adams portfolio

business. I sent him a copy of the contract, which I'm sure DC wasn't very happy about but they already know me, so there was no reason for them to think that I wouldn't. I don't know what's going on with Joe but he seems to be getting treated very nicely by DC these days. I think that DC is actually making an effort to show that they're a better company. I have to give Paul credit. Other people say that they come from freelance, Paul actually does come from freelance. If you ask Paul, "Are you going to hand over the store to the freelancers?" No, not even a chance. On the other hand when you present a reasonable position to Paul he looks at the reasonableness of it and makes his decision based on that. Is it good for the company? Is it reasonable? Is there any reason that we should say no? So, it's become a company that has flexibility, but it's not stupid. I think you'd have to say at Marvel that they're just stupid.

Sim: *I think a lot of what Paul would be looking at—in "real world" terms, as actual book publishers function—DC does own a lot of backlist by a lot of major people and it's better to start treating it that way in the hopes*

of maybe getting something out of them in the future since DC doesn't have them locked up in exclusive contracts.

Adams: Here's an example of what I'm talking about with Marvel. Marvel decides to help Dave Cockrum. They're going to give him royalties on one of the five characters that he created. How does that make any sense? It seems to me that they should either be complete hardasses about it and give him nothing or give him royalties on all of the characters he created. Why give him a royalty on one character and not on the other four? What's the sense in that?

Sim: *I think a lot of that is an attempt to limit the legal culpability…*

Adams: But giving a royalty on the one character is a precedent-setting thing. If you do it for one character there's no legal reason that you wouldn't be obligated to do it for the other characters. Or for this guy's characters over here.

Dick Ayers is a good example of their shortsightedness. Dick Ayers created *Ghost Rider*, which began as a western strip and has evolved into this whole other character. Now, Dick Ayers went to court on this and they beat him and they beat him rather badly. In my opinion one of the mistakes Dick Ayers made was in not getting in touch with friends and having them come in and testify on his behalf. I would have been one of them had I known and I would have pointed out that the traditions at the companies are not what the companies say they are.

The *actual* tradition in the comic-book field is that all of the creators had guns to their heads through most of the fifties and the sixties. They had to do what they were told because they were basically held hostage. The business relationship they had with the publishers was coercive: sign these blanket waivers or you won't get work. In that circumstance they were legally constrained from protecting their own interests and that is a sound basis for challenging the ownership of what they created when the time comes to do so. They have the legal right to have those coercive business relationships either invalidated or modified, particularly if they have expressed any objection along the way.

But, the courts found that the tradition in the comic-book field was that you signed away all of your rights on the back of your check and therefore Dick Ayers wasn't going to win his case.

There's a *Ghost Rider* film coming out.

Dick Ayers is not a young guy, but he's a very nice guy and a very reasonable guy and you could sit and have a cup of coffee with him very easily and say "Dick? We'd really like to give you something on this *Ghost Rider* film even though we won that case and we'd like to come to some sort of amicable arrangement and see that both you and your lovely wife get taken care of. How's this for an offer?" That's not going to hurt them as a company, they're going to pay an amount of money that might otherwise pay a couple of receptionists and still it would make their situation much better. But Marvel isn't going to do that even though it is well within their power and their humanity to go ahead and do that. Why would they not do that? I don't know. They don't even have to give up any rights. They can just say that they're doing this because this is what they feel is the right thing to do.

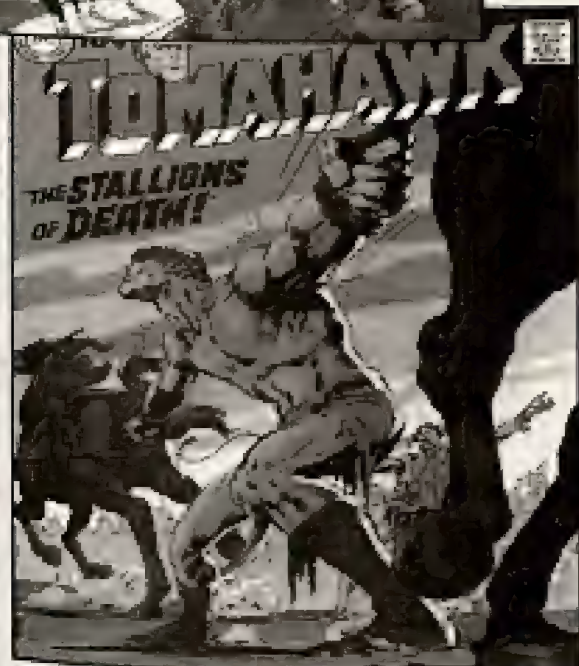
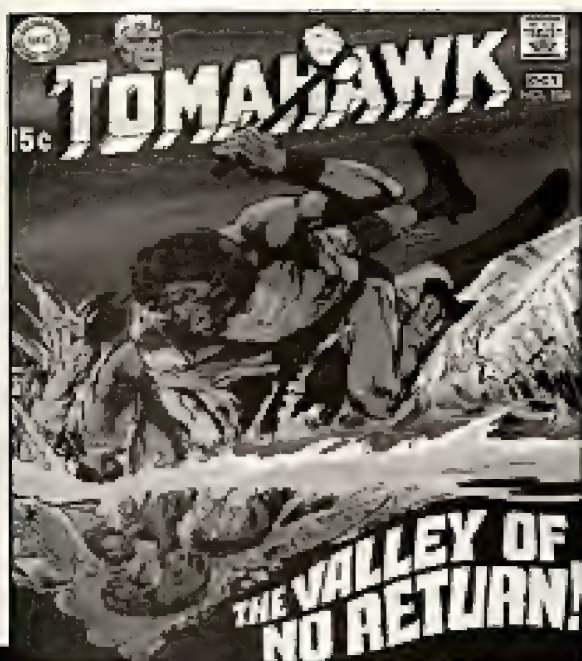
Sim: *I think a lot of it is the extent to which the legal department is driving the company. If you ask a lawyer for advice on how to conduct the company's business he isn't going to recommend any course of action that would make the company even potentially legally culpable or vulnerable.*

Adams: My impression at Marvel is that almost *all* of those fellows are lawyers. Right there you've already got about five strikes against you. There are lawyers that I like and there are lawyers that act honourably but the business of a lawyer and the business of the law is not, to say the least, exactly the same thing as the business of ethics and…

Sim: *Well particularly at the corporate level because in that case they are being paid very large retainers to prevent the "worst case" scenario from happening. The "worst case" with Dick Ayers would be that by paying him anything on* Ghost Rider, *you might give him legal standing to appeal a ruling that you already won so there's no incentive to do so. In fact there's the* disincentive *of how do you explain to a judge that you beat him on his having a stake in* Ghost Rider *and then turned around and bought him off. A judge is going to say, unfortunately, I can't see any other reason that you would pay him all this money unless you thought he had a case against you so maybe he does.*

Adams: If you look at it in a larger sense, lawyers don't really have a function for society. I'm a realistic person about what it is that I do. I'm a parasite. I feed off the excess capital in our society. Artwork and comics are not a human necessity so making a living doing them only takes place where there is excess. People give me money for my pictures because they're entertained by them but it's not a direct contribution to society in the way that digging a ditch for a new sewer line or building houses or building roads is a direct contribution. It's like being a dancer or a film actor or whatever. You basically live off the excess of society. If you live in a society that doesn't have extra money, people like me can't exist.

Lawyers are slightly worse than that. They *drain* a society, even when the society doesn't have it to give. They put people out of business, whole businesses. They drive up insurance rates because they're taking money away from doctors for malpractice insurance. Instead of taking that doctor's license away for six months or a year or life or instead of putting that doctor in jail they take money. And we pretend that that money comes from the doctor but it doesn't come from the doctor it comes from the doctor's insurance company which is paid for by our insurance premiums. So we are, collectively, financing what the doctor does wrong and putting him back in his office and giving huge amounts of money to people who are in a real sense culpable for put-

ting that incompetent doctor back in his office.

Sim: *Well, not only that but in 70% of legal settlements the lion's share of the settlement goes to pay the legal bills whether it's just the hourly billing rate we have in this country or the contingency fees you have in the United States.*

Adams: Yes, you mean that the lawyers aren't actually working for an hourly rate, they're working for a *percentage* of the *award*? Note my emphasis on those two words, "percentage" and "award". They're not being *paid* for their work, they're being *awarded* money. I can't think of a more corrupt concept than that.

Sim: *You'd have to go a long way...*

Adams: You'd have to go a long way.

Anyway, I'm trying to let people know that if in fact DC is publishing their stuff on the same basis that DC is publishing my stuff that they ought to get the same larger percentage that I'm getting.

Because of course I never keep my mouth shut. [laughs]

And it's not as if DC comes to me anymore saying, "Now can you just keep this to yourself?" Of course the answer would be "No."

Sim: *They know better than that.*

Adams: They know better than that. And if they were to say, "You know, we may *not* do this with you unless you keep it to yourself," I would be laughing for a long time. And they would turn red, because I would say, "Are you *threatening* me? *Blackmailing* me? Is this what we do in comics?"

* * * * * * * *

As the car swung down Blue Jays Way, past Wayne Gretzky's landmark *Gretzky's* restaurant I remarked to myself on the difference between these two pre-eminent legends in their respective fields. Just before Peter Pocklington, the owner of the Edmonton Oilers had sold Gretzky to Bruce McNall of the Los Angeles Kings, he had given Gretzky the chance to call the deal off. But Gretzky had gone ahead, as he would say later, because the news conference had already been called, the terms had already been decided, the papers had been drawn up. How different might the complexion of hockey today be if Gretzky had called Pocklington's bluff, if Gretzky had had the larger interest of the integrity of hockey in Canada in mind and had decided that that superseded personal considerations. "Great, Mr. Pocklington. Let's tear up the contract, tell the media to get lost and I'll retire here in Edmonton."

"Is this what we do in comics?"

At every juncture in his long career, that has been Neal Adams' pre-eminent question when it came to his decision-making, mindful at all times that his own choices had repercussions for others and often for *generations of others* who would follow

At left: Adams's Tomahawk *art from the late sixties is sometimes overlooked by fans, but these comics contain some of the artist's most dynamic covers.*

behind him.

"Is this what we do in comics?"

Part indictment, part challenge, part exhortation, part lecture. This is what we've done *until now*, but is there a better way of doing things? And if there *is* a better way of doing things, why aren't we doing it? And if there's *no good reason to not do it*, when can we start doing it differently? Whether it's getting artists' artwork returned, manipulating personalities so as to get 32 more colours on the DC separations chart with a simple phone call, showing his peers how easy it is to license foreign rights while still retaining control of an intellectual property, pushing for and helping to facilitate the introduction of a royalty system, however flawed and however meagre, getting Jerry Seigel and Joe Shuster their annual stipend from DC Comics…

"Is this what we do in comics?"

When the question is posed by a talent who had the same effect on the comic-book field in his twenties and thirties that he had had on Johnstone & Cushing in his teens, you know the question isn't merely rhetorical or merely philosophical.

"Some men see things as they are and ask, 'why?' I see things as they never were and ask, 'why not?'"

I can't picture Neal Adams going ahead just because the papers have been drawn up, the press conference has been called. Presented with an alternative he would have considered it on its own merits and if it seemed like the better way to go, that's the way he would have gone and let the devil take the hindmost when it came to ancillary effects. People whine and people complain and people are fearful because that's just the way that most people are. Far from that being a good reason not to do the right thing, it's actually the best reason to do the right thing.

"Is this what we do in comics?"

As you can see from this article, I have taken issue with many of Neal Adams' choices when I made my own choices, but I never lost sight of the fact that when fortune smiles upon you and you are given opportunities that others have never had before you, you become obligated to choose wisely on the basis of what constitutes the greatest good for the greatest number. In many ways, I learned that by observing Neal Adams closely with that hard, unflinching gaze of youth which is usually composed of equal parts idealism and cynicism. Neal Adams always measured up to my highest ideals of human conduct because—even when I *disagreed* with his choice—I never doubted that he had made his choice because he had examined the options from every angle and had decided on his own best and most ethical course of action.

The car slowed to halt before the entrance to the Intercontinental Hotel which is housed within the Rogers Center, formerly Skydome, the home of the Toronto Blue Jays and we unloaded the Adamses bags onto the sidewalk and said our goodbyes. As we shook hands, Neal was examining me carefully—yes, forensically, you could say—still obviously wondering why I was being so nice to him. Even at the last minute, I think he had been expecting a business proposition, a request for a deal on some original artwork, a license of one of his characters or the chance to reprint his work. Something.

On the short drive from the Intercontinental to the King Edward Hotel where I would be staying, the driver told me that he was very familiar with the way because he had driven legendary comedian Don Rickles from home base at the King Edward Hotel to various professional engagements in and around Southern Ontario over a week or two recently.

It was certainly interesting to listen to his impressions of this comedian who had been a favourite of mine in my youth. But, I have to admit that I was only half listening and missed most of what he was saying. All I could manage to think consciously was:

"Wow. That was *the* Neal Adams."

Postscript

Catching the indefatigable Mrs. Adams in mid-manager (or was it a mid-stewardess?) day at Continuity I asked if she had any final thoughts on her family's trip to Niagara Falls.

"I thought it was great. It was definitely…magic. It makes you feel so small and at the same time so proud to be a part of the world. It definitely gives you cause to believe in a God.

"Ever since, I've become a big promoter of Niagara Falls. Anybody that I talk to who's going on a road trip of any kind upstate, I say, 'Go to Niagara Falls. Best place in the world.'"

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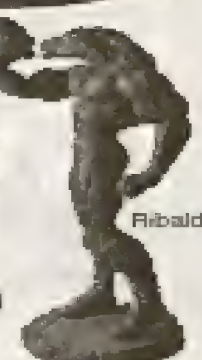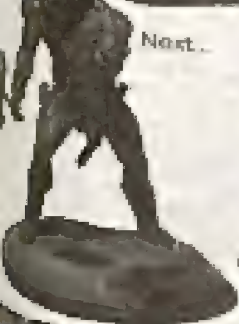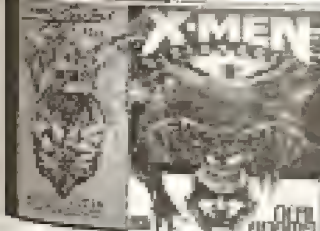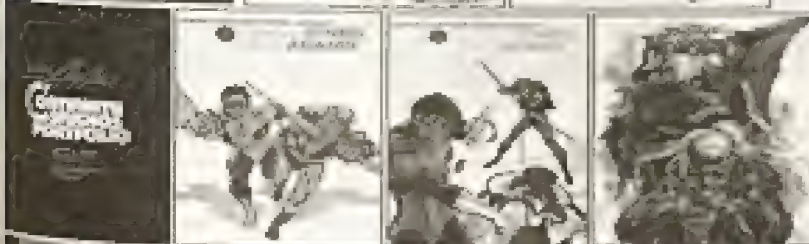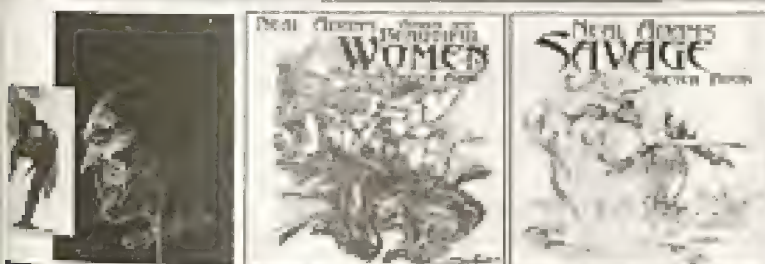
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Neal Adams's Influence on Cerebus

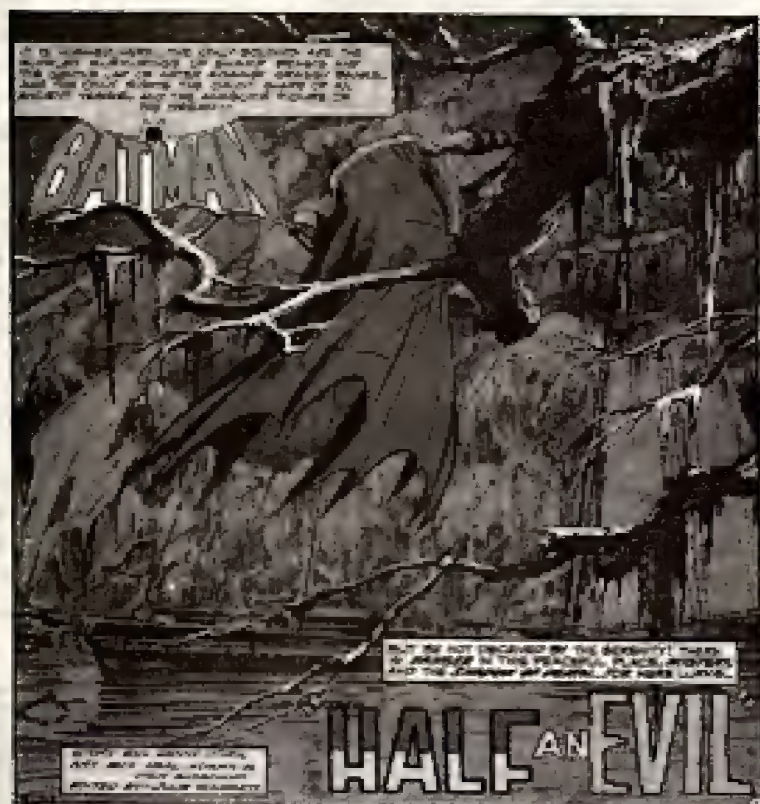
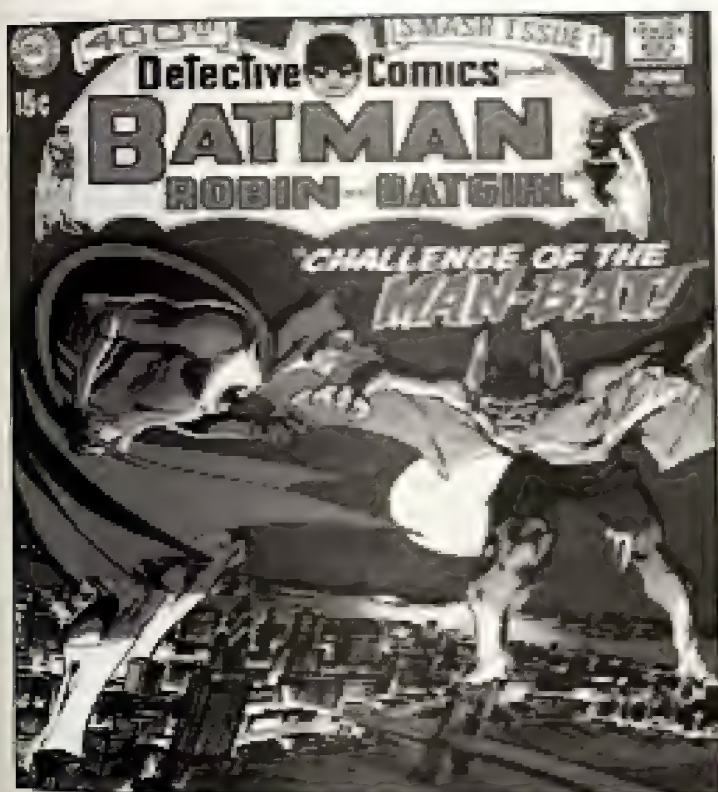
One major influence on *Cerebus* has been the art of Neal Adams specifically and, in a more general sense, his attitude of pushing for innovations in the comic industry. The *High Society* trade is dedicated, in part, to Adams, "who broke barriers of all kinds and made it look like fun." In *Cerebus* 51, Sim responded to a letter by writing, "I am indeed highly influenced by Neal Adams. I think the impact of his work will be felt for many years to come. He is a pioneer in many aspects of the medium we take for granted today."

Dominant Influence in the Industry

Adams's influence on superhero comic art has been immense. When he started working for DC Comics in the late sixties, Curt Swan's beautifully rendered—but dynamically lacking—style ruled the company. At Marvel, Jack Kirby's raw, explosive style dominated. At a glance it might appear that Adams combined the two styles, but it would be more accurate to say that Adams brought something fresh to the table. His background was in commercial illustration and photorealistic comic strip art, and he incorporated those disciplines along with innovative panel layouts (only Will Eisner and Jim Steranko came close to Adams in this regard) to create something quite new. Adams also had a flair for unusual camera angles—extreme birds-eye and worms-eye views with dramatically foreshortened figures (one of the most difficult aspects of drawing to master).

The realistic detail Adams brought gave the stories a sense of place that had rarely been seen. Superheroes—pure fantasy—seemed to exist in the real world. Moreover, Adams's adeptness at rendering powerful facial expressions gave characters a wider range of emotion than was possible with the usual four or five stock expressions most comic artists could render.

Because of the current availability of reprint volumes, many recent comic fans are aware of Adams's work on "Deadman," *The Avengers*, *X-Men*, and more. DC's deluxe three-volume *Neal Adams Batman* reprints the artist's complete work on the character—work that rescued Batman from the campy excesses of the mid-sixties that came as a result of the television series. Adams returned the character to its dark, moody, crime-solving roots, and such a redefinition influenced Frank Miller's *Dark Knight* and Tim Burton's Batman feature films (plus, of course, the recent *Batman Begins*, which even featured a villain co-created by Adams, Ras al Ghul). While a redefinition of Batman may have been inevitable at some point, Adams was the one to effect the change (along with writer Denny O'Neil) and probably the best person to do it.

Adams's popularity can be seen in the huge number of imitators that followed. Dick Giordano, who had been working in comics longer than Adams and who inked much of Adams's Batman stories, altered his own drawing to a more Adams-ish style. Early work by Brent Anderson, Frank Brunner, John Byrne, Howard Chaykin, Mike Grell, Mike Nasser, Joe Rubinstein, Bill Sienkiewicz, Dave Cockrum, and Alan Weiss, among others, shows a great debt to Adams. Actually, virtually *every* new artist who broke

Left: Adams's classic splash page from Batman 234. *(Inks by Dick Giordano.) Above: Sim's version from* Cerebus 31 *featuring the first full Moon Roach story.*

Left: Batman faces Man-Bat for the first time in Detective 400. *Right: Sim's splash page for* Cerebus 33 *takes an Adams-ish worm's eye view of the moment for a dramatic effect.*

into the industry in the seventies exhibited either an occasional influence or, often, wholesale swiping, of Adams's work. Some of the more dramatic poses were lifted again and again by other artists for their own work. His cover art would be redrawn by other artists and appear again years later.

Part of the reason for the huge number of pseudo-Adams artists resulted from Continuity Studios, an art studio headed by Adams and Giordano. A lot of commercial work came out of there, all influenced by Adams's style. And the studio sometimes worked collectively on comics—often to get a job out quickly—and called themselves the "Crusty Bunkers." Adams or Giordano would ink the main figures, while whoever was in the studio that day would ink the backgrounds. The trained eye could see the difference from character-to-character and panel-to-panel, but to the general comic book fan, the work had the necessary cohesion to work well. As the studio artists gradually received assignments on their own, Adams's influence in comics as a whole increased.

Influence in Cerebus

Sim, too, fell under Adams's influence. Sim's early aborted project *Revolt 3000* shows a heavy debt. In *Cerebus*, Barry Windsor-Smith's art style would dominate the early issues of *Cerebus*, which took place in a world more akin to Conan's Hyborian Age than the superhero worlds Adams generally drew. But as early as *Cerebus* 4, Adams became an obvious influence. Sim used

"Death" from Cerebus 151 *and Adams's cover for* World's Finest 176.

a character on a Neal Adams *World's Finest* comic book cover (#176) as the basis for the Death character introduced in that issue.

Cerebus 11-12 contained the series' first superhero parody—the first Roach incarnation, the Captain Cockroach. Batman provided the blueprint for the Cockroach, and considering Adams's effect on the character noted above, the stage was set for Sim to exploit his interest and appreciation for Adams's work. Ironically, though, he didn't. However, the cover on issue 14 bears a striking resemblance to two Adams covers, *Batman* 224 *and The Brave and the Bold* 76.

Cerebus 20 was the first "Mind Game" issue, and, as Sim admitted in his *Swords of Cerebus* introduction to the story, the inspiration the the unorthodox page layouts came from Adams. In *Following Cerebus* 8, we examined the "Mind Games" issues in some detail, but for those who missed that issue, we'll note here that the *Cerebus* 20 pages, when placed together, form a giant Cerebus figure. Adams had done this at least twice before on a more limited scale. The first time was on a Sunday *Ben Casey* newspaper strip, where Adams incorporated diverse elements from six panels to form a large head (see page 67). A few years later, Adams produced the art for *Strange Adventures* 216 (Jan.-Feb. 1969), the last of the Deadman issues. The art for the entire series was a textbook of exquisite drawing and innovative layouts. (This issue contains the famous panel where some rays inside a cave form the words, "Hey, a Jim Steranko effect.") Near the end of the story, Deadman is floating through a dream-like, alternate dimension. Elements from five individual panels on one page form a giant Deadman head (see *FC* 8). A study of the illustration reveals Adams's incredible imagination. Lips in one panel double as a large eye; another panel's arm doubles as a nose while a belt forms giant lips. It was partly the result of work like this, which had never been seen in comics before, that gave Adams his huge following, especially among up-and-coming comics artists.

While those two pieces—the Ben Casey and Deadman pages—inspired the basic idea of having the *Cerebus* pages form a giant "life-size" figure, another issue of *Strange Adventures* appears to have inspired the format and rendering of the individual pages. In issue 113, Deadman's friend Tiny was dying after having been shot. Deadman raced through black-and-white representations of Tiny's mind in an attempt to help. Meanwhile, surgeons were at work trying to save the life. Adams presented the "dreamworld" and the "real life situations" side by side; for *Cerebus* 20, however, Sim restricted the story to what was going on inside Cerebus's mind. But

At left (top to bottom): the cover of Cerebus *14 appears to combine two Adams covers from* Batman *224 and* The Brave and the Bold *76. (See* World's Finest *202 for yet another variation on the theme by Adams.)*

A dramatic sequence from Detective Comics 410 *by Adams (above left) appears to influence Sim in a Moon Roach page from* Cerebus *31. Note also the appropriation of another Adams panel for another Roach panel.*

Left: Batman swings through the city in Batman *245. Below: Moon Roach strikes a similar pose in* Cerebus *39.*

the rendering is close to Adams's black-and-white work in that issue of *Strange Adventures.* (Again, see *FC* 8 for details.)

Cerebus 21 and 22 contained two more superhero parodies, but once again the art didn't appear very Adams-ish, the Captain America/Bucky parody or even, surprisingly, the Deadman parody. The major Adams influence was just around the corner, however, with *High Society*. Ironically, this novel has a reputation of being about "a lot of people standing around talking about politics"—not the kind of material where one would expect to find Adams-ish art. But soon Moon Roach makes his entrance, and this character allowed Sim to go wild with the Adams influence. As he said in an interview published in *Cerebus Companion* 1, "[I]f I've got Moon Roach, it's an easy Monday....[Y]ou pick up a Neal Adams thing to use for the drawing reference, just look at any of the Batman stories he did, and then take Marvel captions and make them word balloons."

Moon Roach was, of course, a parody of Marvel's Moon Knight, who first received his own book in November 1980 and enjoyed quite a bit of popularity, in part because of the art by Bill Sienkiewicz, at the time considered an "Adams clone."

The Moon Roach stories allowed Sim to indulge in his love of Adams's work. Whether Sim used Adams himself, or Sienkiewicz's own Adams swipes, an Adams-ish superhero finally entered the *Cerebus* world. Moon Roach would appear sporadically throughout *High Society*, and all of these appearances reflected Sim's strongest Adams influence in *Cerebus*. Another example of Adams's influence on *Cerebus* might have appeared in 1983, when Sim introduced an "Arnold Schwarzenegger as Conan" character, Arnold the Isshurian, into the storyline (in addition to a two-page story for Marvel's *Epic Illustrated* 16). Despite the influence Barry Windsor-Smith's early *Conan* had on Sim, the character looks much more like the Conan that Adams drew in Marvel's *Conan the Barbarian* 37

Finally, we should point out (as discussed in this issue's main article) that Adams drew the cover to *Anything Goes* #3 (Fantagraphics, 1986)—an illustration of Cerebus (reproduced on our front cover).

Arnold the Isshurian (above and below right) looks less like Barry Windsor-Smith's Conan (above left from Savage Tales *3), a logical predecessor, than he does like Adams's Conan from* Conan the Barbarian *37. (Arnold art from* Cerebus *47.)*

Above: Moon Roach makes a dramatic entrance in Cerebus *34.*
Below: Batman makes a dramatic exit in Batman *234.*